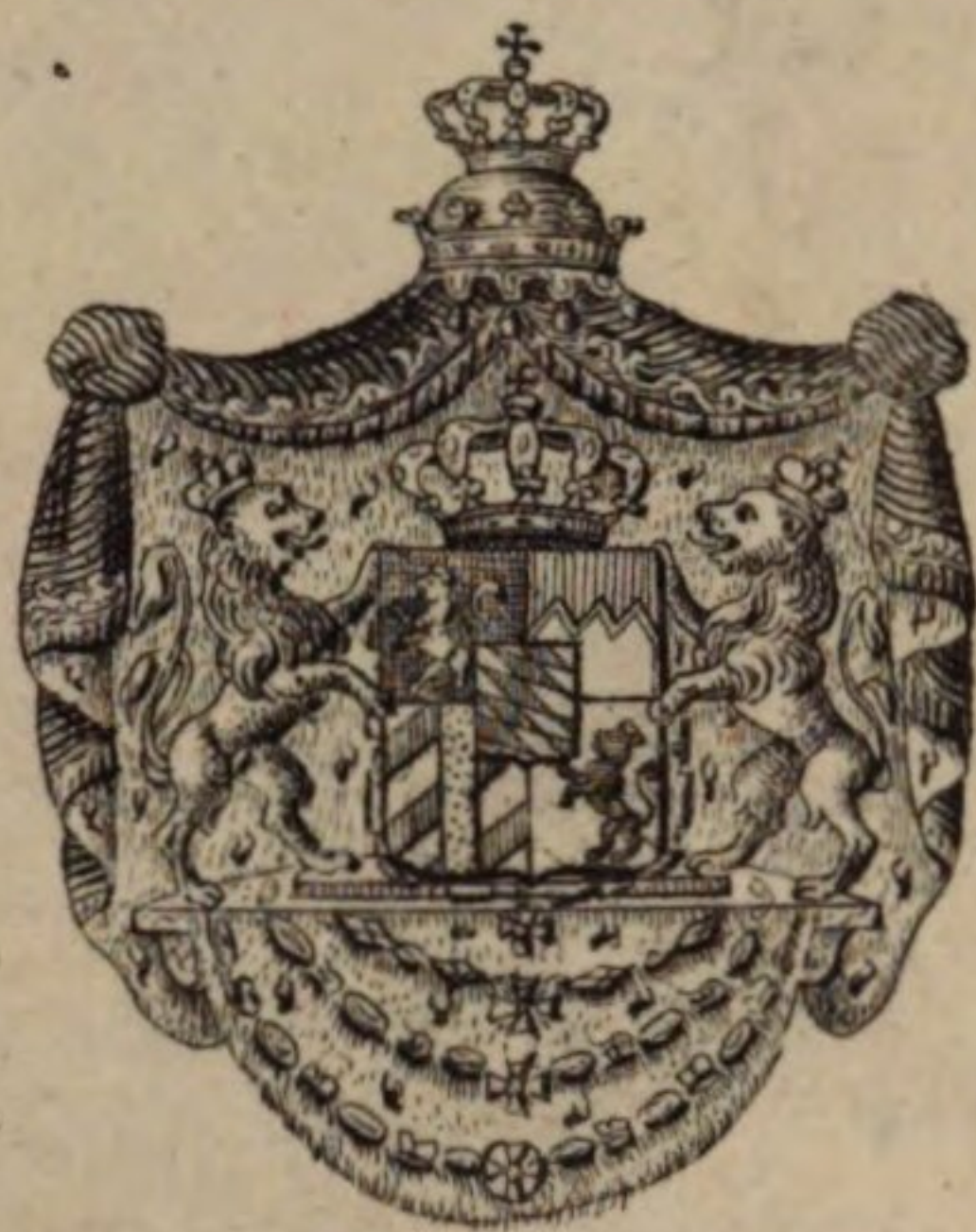


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ESSAY
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AN
DISCOURSE
ESSAY
ON THE
EVILS OF POPULAR IGNORANCE,

&c.

BY JOHN FONTER.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

A. J. HOLDENWORTH.

IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.

1821.

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EVILS OF POPULAR IGNORANCE

ESSAY

BY JOHN WILKINSON

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AN
ESSAY
ON THE
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OF
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— AND A —
DISCOURSE
ON THE
COMMUNICATION OF CHRISTIANITY
TO THE
PEOPLE OF HINDOOSTAN.

—
BY **JOHN FOSTER.**
—

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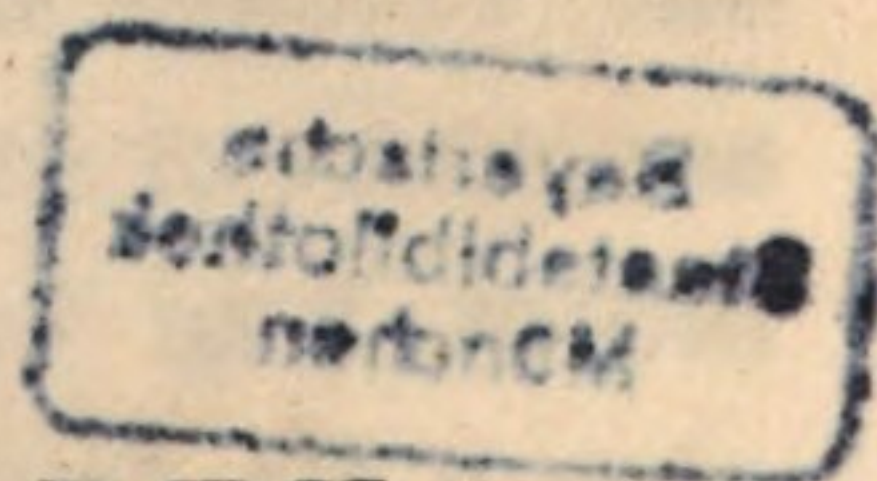
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32. D.



AN
ESSAY

ON THE

EVILS

OF

ADVANCEMENT
POPULAR IGNORANCE:

AND A

DISCOURSE

A somewhat different view of the
communication of Christianity
to the people of Hindostan is
characterized, from what it might have been
designed to be.

It has been a common measure grown out
of the age of John Foster
public and universal feeling in aid of the
British Auxiliary Bible and Foreign School
Society. This measure was a great success
in the eyes of the world.

SECOND EDITION.

Bayerische
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LONDON:

H. J. HODGKINS

IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

J. S. Hughes, Printer, 66, Paternoster Row.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A somewhat different cast will be perceived in the commencement of the following production, and in certain points of its general character, from what it might have borne if designed from the first as a composition in the shape of an Essay.

It has in a considerable measure grown out of the topics of a discourse delivered at a public anniversary meeting in aid of the Bristol Auxiliary British and Foreign School Society. That discourse was, in accordance to the grave character of an assembly in a place of worship, an attempt to display the importance of the object of such institutions in reference mainly to religious and moral considerations. It was introduced by a sentence from the Bible, serving indeed rather as a general indication of the subject, than as a formal basis of the discourse.

When it was determined, a good while after the occasion, to make further use of the observations then offered, the writing was begun in the form of a discourse addressed to an auditory. And it was not till a considerable progress had been made that the attempt to retain this form was discontinued, from finding that it would be impossible to do justice to the subject within the utmost limits to which it can be allowable to extend a composition of that class.

Nothing could be more impertinent than such a detail of circumstances, were it not that this mode of the origination of the essay determined in a great degree its prevailing character, and marked with so expressly theological a reference much of the introductory portion. The mention of these circumstances will account also for what might otherwise be thought to have an affected appearance—the use throughout of the plural pronoun; an expedient by means of which the egotism of public discourses so commodiously slides under a semblance of modesty. This was naturally adopted in beginning the composition as a discourse; and when it had changed almost insensibly into an essay, there did not seem to be any such advantage to be gained by the dismissal of this convenient plural, as to make it worth while to

go back to re-adjust, in conformity to such an alteration, every preceding sentence in which it had occurred.

The short sentence which had served as a text, had been repeatedly introduced in the earlier pages, for its emphatic brevity ; and it was thought it would be both an unnecessary and unworthy labour, to set about modifying the tenour of the writing in order to exclude it ; while there is no essayist that would not be gratified to be able to give point and aggravation to his own periods, by the appropriate repetition of a vigorous phrase from an ancient classic. And besides, the thoughts in the first part of the essay, were from the direct suggestion, and are but as an echo, of that sentence of sacred language. If retained in the composition, however, it was to be retained also at the beginning, where accordingly it stands as a motto.

A few traces of an address to a present assembly, in the introductory paragraphs, have not quite yielded to the modifying process by which more have been obliterated.

The original use for which the chief topics of the essay were studied, determined, as it has been stated, their selection and mode of treatment. It was as a moral and religious subject, that the intellectual condition of the

people, and its consequences, were to be exhibited. The object was, to present that view of their ignorance, in which the greatness of its mischief and calamity should most impressively appear. There are important special relations, in which the effects of the ignorance, or the cultivation, of the people may be contemplated. Some of these are of indispensable consideration to the legislator, some to the political economist. But it is in that general and moral view, in which ignorance in the lower orders is beheld the cause of their vice, irreligion, and consequent misery, that the subject is attempted, very imperfectly and somewhat desultorily, to be displayed in the following pages.

Nor was it within the writer's design to suggest any particular plans, regulations, or instrumental expedients, in promotion of the system of operations so hopefully begun for raising these classes from their degradation. His part has been to represent generally the importance of this concern, and especially to enforce the necessity of giving to their children an education truly deserving the name. In the course of doing this, occasions have been seized of exposing the absurdity, (not to impute a less pardonable actuating principle,) of those who are hostile to the mental improvement of the people. If any

one should say that this is a mere beating of the air, for that there are scarcely any now that retain such hostility, the writer would rather compliment him on being most exceedingly candid in his estimate of the dispositions of his fellow mortals, than tell him that, either he is utterly unacquainted with a numerous and self-important portion of our national community, or he is passing dull in understanding very obvious indications.

It is feared the readers of the following essay will find some cause to complain of a defect of distribution and arrangement. To the candour of persons who are practised in mental and literary operations it would not be altogether an unavailing plea, that when, in a preparation to meet a particular occasion for which but little time has been allowed, a series of topics and observations has been hastily sketched out, it is far from easy to throw them afterwards into a different order and connexion. The author has to bespeak indulgence also, here and there, to something too like repetition. If he qualifies the terms in which this fault is acknowledged, it is because he is willing to think, that though there be a recurrence of similarities, there may not often be a mere bare iteration, there being a diversity and addition of the matter of illustration and enforcement.

Any benevolent writer on the subject would wish he could treat it without such frequent use of the phrases, "lower orders," "subordinate classes," "inferior portion of society," and other expressions of the same kind; because they have an invidious sound, and have indeed been very often used in contempt. He can only say, that he uses them with no such feeling; that they are employed simply as the most obvious terms of designation; and that he would like better to employ any less ungracious ones that did not require an affected circumlocution.

In several parts of the essay, there will be found a language of emphatic censure on that conduct of states, that predominant spirit and system in the administration of the affairs of nations, by which the people have been consigned to such a deplorable condition of intellectual and consequently moral degradation, while resources approaching to immensity have been lavished on objects chosen in preference to its amendment. So far from feeling that such observations can require any apology, the writer thinks it is high time for all the advocates of intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, to raise a protesting voice against that policy of the states denominated Christian, (and especially our own,) which has for age after age found every conceiv-

able thing necessary to be done, at all costs and hazards, rather than to enlighten, reform, and refine the people. He thinks that nothing can more strongly betray a judgment enslaved, or a time-serving dishonesty, in those who would assume to dictate to such an advocate and to censure him, than that sort of doctrine which tells him that it is beside his business, and quite out of his sphere, to animadvert on the course pursued by national authorities, when he sees them, through one long period of time after another, not doing that which is the most important of all things to be done for the people over whom they preside, but doing what is in substance and effect the reverse; and doing it on that great scale, which contrasts so fearfully with the small one on which the individuals who deplore such perversion of power are confined to attempt a remedy of the consequences.

This interdiction comes with its worst appearance, when it is put forth in terms affecting a profound reverence of religion; a reverence which cannot endure that so holy a thing should be defiled, by being brought in any contact with such a subject as the manner in which the intellectual and moral state of the people is affected by the general conduct of the ruling power. The advocate of schemes for the improvement of their

rational nature *may* take his ground, his strongest ground, on religion, for enforcing on *individuals* the duty of promoting such an object. In the name and authority of religion he may press on their consciences with respect to the application of their property and influence ; and he may adopt under its sanction a strongly judicial language in censure of their negligence, their insensibility to their accountableness, and their expenditures foreign to the most important uses : in all this he does well. But the instant he begins to make the like judicial application of its laws to the public conduct of the governing authorities, (and to make it, not in the way of commenting on that conduct on a *general* account, but strictly and specially as it affects the object in question,) that instant he debases christianity to politics, most likely to party-politics ; and a pious horror is testified at the profanation. Christianity is to be honoured somewhat after the same manner as the Lama of Thibet. It is to stay in its temple, to have the proprieties of homage duly preserved within its precincts, but to be *exempted* (in reverence of its sanctity !) from all cognisance of great public affairs, even in the points where they most involve its interests. It could shew, perhaps, in what manner the administration of those affairs

injures these interests ; but it would degrade its sacred character by talking of any such matter. But christianity must have leave to decline the compliment. As to its sacred character, it can *venture that*, on the strength of its intrinsic quality and of its own guardianship, while in a censorial capacity it steps on what will be called a political ground, so far as to take account of what regard has been shewn, or what means have been left disposable, for operations to promote the grand essentials of human welfare, by that public system which has grasped and expended the strength of the community. Christianity is not so demure a thing that it cannot, without violating its consecrated character, go into the exercise of this judicial office. And as to its *right* to do so,—either it has a right to take cognisance now of the manner in which the spirit and measures of states and their regulators bear upon the most momentous interests, or it will have no right to be brought forward as the supreme law for the final award upon those proceedings and those men.

A great national plan for the Education of the lower classes, expected to come shortly before the Legislature, might have seemed to announce that a far better order of things

than that described in the following essay, was on the point of commencing. No one would be more pleased than the writer that any of its representations and remonstrances should become obsolete almost before they are heard. The luminous and comprehensive mind of the Mover of this important measure, the independent spirit of his speculations, his contempt of old prejudices, his hostility to all dwarfish, restrictive, and antiquated systems of policy, and his admirable exertions and success in exposing the iniquitous management under which a multitude of institutions for education had become worse than useless, seemed to give a certain pledge that any plan which he would propose could not fail to be a model of liberality and equity. It must have been from some widely different quarter that we could have expected a scheme framed in conformity to those very prejudices, those invidious distinctions in the community, those principles of exclusive privilege and unequal advantage, of which it had not been supposed there could be a more determined enemy. And if the frame and substance of such a scheme appeared in striking contrariety to its Author's long avowed and proclaimed principles, the mode devised for ensuring its pure and effectual operation seemed to present as signal a contrast with his reputed high-toned pride. It was most sur-

prising that, for a due exercise of supervision, he should submit to the humiliation of proposing—not any mode of placing the schools under free public inspection, not any adjustment for subjecting them to the vigilance of the respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who must naturally be most interested for their right management, not any method, in short, which experience had proved to be beneficial—but an appointment of very much the same nature as that of which he had himself just rendered the utter inefficiency so notorious.

To complete the conjunction of remarkable circumstances, this scheme, which takes for its very basis an invidious distinction; which must bring more frequently and offensively into view, with an increased activity of the attendant and inevitable feelings, all the ungracious circumstances already existing in the relative state of two great portions of the nation; and which creates a new set of disabilities, which the privileged portion will be sure to consider as conferring on *them* another mark of honourable superiority, and an advantage gained against an enemy,—this scheme is brought forward precisely and critically at the moment when the Legislature is adopting a great measure of liberal justice for abolishing the disabilities and disadvantageous distinctions of the Roman Catholics.

It will be a highly curious fact in our history, if the very same month should be recorded as the time when the very same Legislature annihilated what had been regarded as marks of dishonour to the adherents of the popish religion, and affixed additional ones to the protestant dissenters.

The proposal of such a scheme from such an Author, strange as it seems, must have its possible explanation. Let him, or any leading supporter of the measure, (who is at the same time an advocate of liberal principles,) disdaining the unavailing sophistry of an attempt to throw a deceptive semblance over the project, make a plain manly declaration of the predicament in which they find the matter to stand, though it were to be in terms like these: that because the state of the people with respect to education is so bad, it is thought urgently necessary that in a national form *something* should be done for the removal of so great an evil; but because the old prejudices and jealousies, the spirit of domination and exclusion, the antipathies of bigotry, are found so unmitigated in the nineteenth century, it were in vain to think of obtaining acquiescence in a liberal project; and therefore a very exceptionable one is offered, with the only recommendation that it may be better than nothing. In England we are to be content that in an institution for popular

education, that equal ground should be refused to dissenters, which some popish states on the continent are freely allowing the protestants.

The end of a preface cannot be the place for discussing the subject. Nor is there any need, after a number of sensible publications have plainly exposed the evils in the constitution of the plan, the certain and the threatened evils in its operation, and the probability that it would substantially fail of its object. That it is framed in violation of liberal theory, ought to be, without descending to particulars, a sufficient condemnation of any project, in a country and age pretending to be enlightened. It is quite enough to suffer the continuance of *old* institutions founded upon an order of arbitrary distinctions and exclusions. That *new* ones should be framed on the same principles, yet professedly for the general good, and empowered to exact support indiscriminately from all, is to be protested against by every liberal mind. But the opposers of the measure in question have insisted much less on this general and theoretical objection, than on those made in anticipation of its practical consequences. They plead that the institution would have the effect of breaking up a multitude of schools already in existence for the children of the poor; that it would diminish the means of instruction to some numerous

classes of them ; that it seems to recognise the principle, in a country *not* Mahomedan, that the minds of females are not worth instruction ; that it would infallibly occasion numberless petty grievances, and many serious injuries, to the poor persons not attending the established worship,—grievances and injuries for which there would be little hope of redress ; that in its appointments it would involve a great deal of partiality and servility ; that it would either repress the benevolent gratuitous activity of a great number of labourers in the instruction of the people, or load the continuance of their labours with a heavy tax ; and that the expense to the nation, in a season of great distress, would be enormous,—to which consideration let it be added, that there appears no manner of hope that any *other national expense would be diminished in order to furnish resources for this plan.* In various parts of the following essay it is represented how easily the great disposers of the public means might have provided the expedients for improving the education of the people ; but this is always on the supposition that they did not expend the public means without limit on very different objects.

March, 1821.

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AN
ESSAY,

&c.

My People are destroyed for lack of Knowledge.

HOSEA.

SECTION I.

Defect of sensibility in the view of the unhappiness of mankind.—Ignorance one grand cause of that unhappiness.—Ignorance prevalent among the ancient Jewish people.—Its injurious operation—and ultimately destructive consequence.—More extended consideration of ignorance as the cause of misery among the ancient heathens.

It may excite in us some sense of wonder, and perhaps of self-reproach, to reflect with what a stillness and indifference of the mind we can hear and repeat sentences asserting facts which are awful calamities; a repose of feeling which may be perceived to remain undisturbed, even when those calamities are of

the nature or have the aggravation of moral and spiritual evil. And this indifference is more than the accidental and transient state, which might prevail at seasons of peculiar heaviness or languor. The self-inspector will often be compelled to acknowledge it as a symptom and exemplification of the *habit* of his mind, that ideas of misery and destruction, though expressed in the plainest strongest language, seem to come with but a faint glimmer on his apprehension, and die away without being able to awake one emotion of that sensibility which so many comparatively trifling causes can bring into exercise.

Will the hearers of the sentence just now repeated from the sacred book, give a moment's attention to the effect which it has on them? We might suppose them accosted with the question, Would you find it difficult to say what idea, or whether any thing distinct enough to deserve the name of an idea, has been impressed by the sound of words bearing so melancholy a significance? And would you have to confess, that they excite no interest which would not instantly give place to that of the smallest of your own concerns, occurring to your thoughts; or would not leave free the tendency to wander loose among casual fancies; or would not yield to feelings of the ludicrous, at the sight of any little

unlucky or whimsical circumstance? It would not probably be unfair to suspect such faintness of apprehension, and such unfixedness and indifference of thought, in the majority of any large number of persons, though drawn together ostensibly to attend to matters of gravest concern. And perhaps many of the most serious of them would acknowledge it requires great and repeated efforts to bring themselves to such a contemplative application to an important subject, that it shall lay hold on the affections, though it should press on them, as in the present instance, with facts and reflections of a nature the most strongly appealing to a mournful sensibility.

That the “people are destroyed,” is perceived to have the sound of a lamentable declaration. But its import loses all force of significance in falling on a state of feeling which, if resolvable into distinct sentiments, would be expressed to some such effect as this:—that the people’s destruction, in whatever sense of the word, is doubtless a deplorable thing, but quite a customary and ordinary matter, the prevailing fact, indeed, in the general state of this world; that, in truth, it would seem as if they were made but to be destroyed, for that they have constantly been, in all imaginable ways, the subjects of destruction; that, subjected in common with all living corporeal beings on earth to the doom of

death, and to a fearful diversity of causes tending to inflict it, they have also appeared, through their long sad history, consigned to a spiritual and moral destruction, if that term be applicable to a condition the reverse of wisdom, goodness, and happiness; that, in short, such a sentence as that cited from the prophet, is too merely an expression of what has been always and over the whole world self-evident, to excite any particular attention or emotion.

Thus the destruction, in every sense of the word, of human creatures, is so constantly obvious, as mingled and spread throughout the whole system of things in which we are placed, that the mind has been insensibly wrought to that protective obtuseness which (like the thickness of the natural clothing of animals in rigorous climates) we acquire in defence of our own ease against any grievances from which we cannot remove ourselves. An instinctive policy to avoid feeling, with respect to this prevailing destruction, has so effectually taught us how to maintain the exemption, by all the requisite sleights of overlooking, diverting, forgetting, and admitting deceptive maxims of palliation, that the art or habit is become almost mechanical. When fully matured, it appears like a wonderful adventitious power, added to the natural faculties of the mind,—a power of *not*

seeing (though with eyes open and perfectly endowed with sight) what is obviously and glaringly presented to view on all sides. There is, indeed, a dim general recognition that such things are; the hearing of a bold denial of their existence would give an instant sense of absurdity, which would provoke a pointed attention to them, the more perfectly to verify their reality; and the perception how real and how dreadful they are, might continue distinct and vivid as long as we were animated with the zeal of contradicting and exploding that absurd denial; but, in the ordinary state of feeling, the mind preserves an easy dulness of apprehension toward the melancholy vision, and sees it as if it saw it not.

This fortified insensibility may, indeed, be sometimes broken in upon with violence, by the sudden occurrence of some particular instance of human destruction, in either import of the word; some example of peculiar aggravation, or happening under extraordinary and striking circumstances, or very near us in place or interest. An emotion is excited of pity, or terror, or horror; so strong, that if the person so affected has been habitually thoughtless and has no wish to be otherwise, he fears he shall never be able to recover his state of careless ease; or if of a

more serious disposition, thinks it impossible he can ever cease to feel an awful and salutary effect. This more serious person perhaps also thinks, it must be inevitable that henceforward his feelings will be more alive to the miseries of mankind. But how obstinate is an inveterate habitual state of the mind against any single impressions made in contravention to it! Both the thoughtless and the more reflective man may probably find, that a comparatively short lapse of time suffices to relieve them from any thing more than slight momentary reminiscences of what had struck them with such painful force, and to restore, in regard to the general view of the acknowledged misery of the human race, nearly the accustomed tranquillity. The course of feeling bears some resemblance to a listless stream of water, which, after having been dashed into commotion by a massive substance flung into it, or by its precipitation at a rapid, relapses, in the progress of a few fathoms and a few moments, into its former sluggishness of current.

But is it well that this should be the state of feeling, while a fatal process is going on under which the people are destroyed? Is there not cause to suspect some unsound principle in a tranquillity to which it makes no material difference whether they be destroyed or saved;

a tranquillity which would hardly, perhaps, have been excited to an act of deprecation at such an appearance as that presented to Ornan; and which might at the deluge have permitted the privileged patriarch to sink in a soft slumber at the moment when the ark was felt to move from its ground? Is it possible to conceive that beings put in one place, so near together, so much alike, and under such a complication of connexions and dependences, can yet really be so insulated, as that some of them may, without any thing wrong in feeling, behold, with immovable composure, innumerable companies of the rest in such a condition, that it had been better for them not to have existed?

To such a condition a vast multitude have been consigned by "the lack of knowledge." And we have to appeal concerning them to whatever there is of benevolence and conscience in those who deem themselves happy instances of exemption from this deplorable consignment; and are sensible that their state of inestimable privilege is the result, under the blessing of heaven, of the reception of information, of truth, into their minds. Amidst the benefit and delight of what they thus possess in consequence of knowing, they might make, sometimes, the trial how far they can go toward conceiving what their condition

would be under a negation of all this good, through absence of the knowledge which has been its cause. It may, indeed, be alleged that the mind has no power of imagination to place itself as in the predicament of suffering, or having suffered, an annihilation of its knowledge; that it cannot feign itself in a process of putting out one bright fixed truth within it, and another, in order to conceive the state it would be in if they were extinguished. And it is true that such an artificial eclipse of the lights of the soul is not practicable,—that a man cannot create to himself a fictitious temporary consciousness of *not* knowing what he really *does* know. The only imaginable way of making any thing like an approach to this, would be by an act of memory,—by going back through the stages of experience, and endeavouring to recollect what was actually the state of the intellectual faculty antecedently to the reception of each considerable addition of knowledge: a recollection which will be extremely imperfect, especially in the case of those persons who made large attainments in very early life. But, though you cannot perform in imagination a series of acts of *unlearning*, and thus realizing to yourselves, throughout the retrogradation, what you would be, intellectually, at each successive extinction of a portion of knowledge,

you *can* go backward along this train in the way of supposing the negation of many of the valuable *benefits* imparted by that knowledge; enrichments of your existence, which were not the knowledge itself, but accompanied it as its fruit. Distinguishing the respective advantage accruing to you at each stage, and from each particular part, of your progressive intellectual acquirements, you can so make the supposition of that advantage not having become yours, as to conceive, in some measure, in what state you would have been in the absence of it. And, while going through this process, you may consider that you are making out a representation of the condition of innumerable beings of your race.

It may be presumed of many in a numerous assemblage of serious persons, that if their attention were directed to take an account of the benefit they have received through the medium of knowledge, they might in sober truth, and the spirit of gratitude, say they do not well know where to begin the long enumeration, nor how to bring into one estimate so ample a diversity of valuable things. It might be something like being asked to specify, in brief terms, what a highly improved portion of the ground, in a tract rude and sterile if left to itself, has received from cultivation. No little time would be

required to consider and recount what it has received. The fancy is carried back through a gradation of states and appearances, in which the now fertile spots, and picture-like scenes, and commodious passes, may or must have existed in the advance from the original rudeness. The estimate of what has ultimately been effected, rises at each stage in this retrospect of the progress, in which so many valuable changes and additions still required to be followed by something more, to complete the scheme of improvement. In thus tracing backward the condition of a now fair and productive place of human dwelling and subsistence, it may easily be recollected, what a vast number of the earth's inhabitants there are whose places of dwelling are in all those states of worse cultivation and commodiousness, and what multitudes leading a miserable and precarious life amidst the inhospitableness of the waste howling wilderness. Each presented circumstance of fertility or shelter, salubrity or beauty, may be named as what is wanting to a much greater number of the occupants of the world, than enjoy such an advantage.

If, in like manner, a person richly possessed of the benefits imparted by means of knowledge, finds, in attempting to estimate the amount of good thus acquired, that the

kinds and modes of it, in their variety, combinations, and gradations from less to greater, rise so fast on his view as to overpower his computing faculty, he may be reminded that this account of his wealth is, in truth, that of many other men's poverty. And if, while surveying these advantages, presenting themselves to his view on every hand, like an irregular crowd of loaded fruit-trees, one partially seen behind the offered luxury of another, and others still descried, through intervals, in the distance, he can imagine all this to be blasted or consumed, leaving him in a scene of mental desolation,—and if he shall then consider that nearly such is the state of the great multitude,—he will surely feel that a deep compassion is due to so depressed a condition of existence. And how strongly is its infelicity shewn by the very circumstance, that a being who is himself but very imperfectly enlightened, and who is exposed to sorrow and doomed to death, is yet in a state to be able to look down upon the victims of the “lack of knowledge” with profound commiseration. The degree of pity is the measure of conscious superiority.

We may say to persons so favoured,—If knowledge has been made the cause that you are beyond all comparison better qualified to make the short sojourn on this earth to the

greatest advantage, think what a fatal thing that must be which condemns so many, whose lot is contemporary and in vicinity with yours, to pass through the most precious possibilities of good unprofited, and at last to look back on life as a lost adventure. If through knowledge you have been introduced into a new and superior world of ideas and realities, and your intellectual being has there been brought into exercise among the highest interests, and into communication with the noblest objects, think of that condition of the soul to which this better economy has no existence. If knowledge rendered efficacious has become, in your minds, the light and joy of the christian faith and hope, look at the state of those whose minds have never been cultivated to an ability to entertain the evangelical truths even as mere intellectual notions. You would not for the wealth, literally, of an empire consent to descend, were it possible, from the comparative elevation to which you have been raised by means of knowledge, into the melancholy region of spirits abandoned to ignorance.

But in this situation have the mass of the people been from the time of the Prophet, whose words we have cited, down to this hour.

The prophets had their exalted privilege, of dwelling amidst the illuminations of heaven,

effectually countervailed by the grief of beholding the daily spectacle of the grossest manifestations and mischiefs of ignorance, among the people for the very purpose of whose exemption from that ignorance it was that they bore the sacred office. One of the most striking of the characteristics by which their writings so forcibly seize the imagination, is a strange continual fluctuation and strife of lustre and gloom, produced by the intermingling and contrast of the emanations from the Spirit of infinite wisdom with those proceeding from the dark debased souls of the people. We are tempted to pronounce that nation not only the most perverse, but the most unintelligent and stupid of all human tribes. The revealed law of God in the midst of them; the prophets and other organs of oracular communication; religious ordinances and emblems; facts, made and expressly intended to embody truths, in long and various series; the whole system of their super-human government, constituted as a school—all these were ineffectual to create so much just thought in their minds, as to save them from the vainest and the vilest fancies, delusions, and superstitions.

But, indeed, this very circumstance, that knowledge shone on them from Him who knows all things, may in part account for a

stupidity that appears so peculiar and marvellous. The nature of man is in such a moral condition, that any thing is the less acceptable for coming directly from God; it being quite consistent, that the state of mind which is declared to be "enmity against him," should have a dislike to his coming so near, as to impart his communications by his immediate act, and bearing on them the fresh and sacred impression of his hand. The supplies for man's temporal being are conveyed to him through an extended medium, through a long process of nature and art, which seems to place the great First Cause at a commodious distance; and those gifts are, on that account, more welcome, on the whole, than if they were sent as the manna to the Israelites. The manna itself would not, probably, have been so soon loathed, had it been produced in what we call the regular course of nature. And with respect to the intellectual communications which were given to constitute the light of knowledge in their souls, there can, on the same principle, be no doubt that the people would more willingly have opened their minds to receive them and exercise the thinking faculties upon them, if they could have appeared as something originating in human wisdom, or at least as something which, though primarily from a divine

origin, had been long surrendered by the Revealer, to maintain itself in the world by the authority of reason only, like the doctrines worked out from mere human speculation. But truth that was declared to them, and inculcated on them, through a continual immediate manifestation of the Sovereign Intelligence, had a glow of Divinity (if we may so express it) that was unspeakably offensive to their minds, which therefore receded with instinctive avoidance. They were averse to look toward that which they could not see without seeing God; and thus they were hardened in ignorance, through a reaction of human depravity against the too luminous approach of the Divine presence to give them wisdom.

But in whatever degree the case might be thus, as to the cause, the fact is evident, that the Jewish people were not more remarkable for this state of privilege, than for the little benefit, in point of mental light, which they acquired under a dispensation specially and miraculously constituted and administered for their instruction. The sacred history of which they are the subject, exhibits every mode in which the intelligent faculties may evade or frustrate the truth presented to them; every way in which the decided preference for darkness may avail to defy what might have been presumed to be irresistible

irradiations ; every perversity of will which renders men as accountable and criminal for being ignorant as for acting against knowledge ; and every form of practical mischief in which the natural tendency of ignorance is shewn. A great part of what the devout teachers of that people had to address to them, wherever they appeared among them, was in reproach of their ignorance, and in order, if possible, to dispel it. And were we to indulge our fancy in picturing the forms and circumstances in which it was encountered by those teachers, we might be sure of not erring much by figuring situations very similar to what might occur in much later and nearer states of society. If we should imagine one of these good and wise instructors going into a promiscuous company of the people, and asking them, with a view at once to see into their minds and inform them, say ten plain questions, relative to matters somewhat above the ordinary secular concerns of life, but essential for them to understand, it would be a quite probable supposition that he did not obtain from the whole company rational answers to more than three, or two, or even one, of those questions, notwithstanding that every one of them might be designedly so framed, as to admit of an easy reply from the most prominent of the dictates of the “ law and

the prophets," and from the right application of the most memorable of the facts in the national history of the Jews. In his earlier experiments he might be supposed very reluctant to admit the fact, that so many of his countrymen, in one spot, could have been so faithfully maintaining the ascendancy of darkness in their spirits, while surrounded by divine manifestations of truth. He might be willing to suspect he had not been happy in the form of words in which his queries had been conveyed. But it may be believed that all his changes and adaptations of expression, to elicit from the contents of his auditors' understandings something fairly answering to his questions, might but complete the proof that the thing sought was not there. And while he might be looking from one to another, with regret not unmingled with indignation at an ignorance at once so unhappy and so criminal, they probably might little care, excepting some very slight feeling of mortified pride, that they were thus proved to be nearly pagans in knowledge within the immediate hearing of the oracles of God.

Or we may represent to ourselves this benevolent promoter of improvement endeavouring to instruct such a company, not in the way of interrogation, but in the ordinary manner of

discourse, and *assuming* that they actually had in their minds those principles, those points of knowledge, which would, on the former supposition of a course of questions, have qualified them to make the proper replies. It may indeed be too much to imagine a discerning man to entertain such a presumption; but supposing he did, you can well conceive what reception the reasonings, advices, or reproofs, proceeding upon it, would find among the hearers, according to their respective temperaments. Some would be content with knowing nothing at all about the matter, which, they would perhaps say, might be, for aught they knew, something very wise; and, according to their greater or less degree of patience and sense of decorum, would wait in quiet and perhaps sleepy dulness for the end of the irksome lecture, or escape from it by a stolen retreat, or by an open and ostentatiously noisy manner of going away. To others it would all seem ridiculous absurdity, and they would readily laugh aloud if any one would begin. A few possessed of some natural shrewdness, would set themselves to catch at something in the way of cavil, with uncouth aim, but eager intention. While perhaps one or two, of better disposition, imperfectly descrying at moments something true and important in what was

said, and convinced of the friendly intention of the speaker, might feel a transient regret for what they would with honest shame call the stupidity of their own minds, accompanied with some resentment against those to whose neglect it was greatly attributable. The instructor also, as the signs grew evident to him of the frustration of his efforts upon the invincible grossness of the subjects before him, would become animated with indignation at the incompetence or wicked neglect in the system and office of public instruction, of which the intellectual condition of such a company of persons might be taken as a proof and consequence. And in fact there is no class more conspicuous in reprobation, in the solemn invectives of the prophets, than those whose special duty it was to instruct the Jewish people.

Now if such were the state of their intelligence, how would this friend of truth and the people find, how would he have *expected* to find, their piety, their morals, and their happiness, affected by such destitution of knowledge? Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? We are supposing them to be in ignorance of four parts out of five, or even a still greater proportion, of what the Supreme Wisdom was maintaining an extraordinary dispensation to declare to them.

Why to declare, but because each particular in this divine promulgation was pointed to some circumstance, some propensity, some temptation, in their nature and condition, and was exactly fitted to be there applied as a rectifier and guard? The revelations and signs from heaven were the sum of what the Perfect Intelligence judged indispensable to be sent forth from him to his subjects, as seen by him liable to be wrong; and could there be one dictate or fact superfluous in such a communication? If not, consider the case of minds in which one, and a second, and the much greater number, of the points of information thus demonstrated to be necessary, were not contained; of which minds, therefore, the estimates, passions, volitions, principles of action, with the actions also, were in so many instances abandoned to take their chance for good or evil. But *had* they any chance for good in such an abandonment? What principle in their nature was to determine them to good, with an impulse that rendered needless the rational discrimination of it by the light of truth? It were an exceedingly probable thing truly, that some happy instinct, or some guiding star of good fortune, should have beguiled into an unknowing choice of what is right, that very nature which knowledge itself, including a recognition of

the will of God, is so often insufficient to constrain to such a choice.

But further; the absence of knowledge is likely to be something more and worse than simple ignorance. Even were that absence but a mere negation, a vacancy of truth, (the terms truth and knowledge may be used for our present purpose as nearly synonymous,) it would be, by its effect as a *deficiency*, incalculably injurious. But it could not remain a mere deficiency: the vacancy of truth would commonly be found replenished with positive error. Not indeed replenished, (we are speaking of uncultivated persons,) with a comprehensive and arranged set of false notions; for there would not be thinking enough to form opinions in any sufficient number to be distinctly and specifically the opposites to the many truths that were absent: but a few false notions, such as could hardly fail to take the place of absent truth in the ignorant mind, however crude they might be, and however deficient for constituting a full system of error, would be sure to dilate themselves so as to have an operation at all the points where truth was wanting. It is frightful to see what a space in an ignorant mind one false notion can occupy, working nearly the same effect in many distinct particulars, as if there had been so many distinct wrong principles, each

producing specifically its own bad effect. So that in that mind a few false notions, and those the ones most likely to establish themselves there, shall be virtually equivalent to a whole scheme of errors standing formally in place of so many truths of which they are the reverse. And thus the dark void of ignorance, instead of remaining a mere negation, becomes filled with agents of perversion and destruction; as sometimes the gloomy apartments of a deserted mansion have become a den of robbers and murderers.

Such a friend of the people, then, as we were supposing to expend his life and zeal on the object of rescuing them from their ignorance, would see in that ignorance not only the privation of all direction and impulsion to good, but a great positive force of determination toward evil.

But it may be alleged, that he would not find them *wholly* destitute of right information. True; but he would find that the small portion of knowledge which an ignorant people did really possess, could be of very little avail. A knowledge so scanty as to afford no principles adapted for a strict application to a vast number of matters of judgment and conduct, would of course be of small use, from the extreme narrowness of its scope, though it *were* efficient as far as it reached,—though

it *did* produce that limited quantity of good which its few right principles seemed capable of producing, and which might fairly be demanded from it as its proper share, in a due proportion to the amount of good effected by a larger knowledge. But this is not the whole of the misfortune: it would not produce that share. For the fewer are the points to which there is knowledge that can be applied, the less availing is its application even to those few points. It shall be the kind of knowledge apposite to them, and yet be useless; from the obvious cause, that a few just notions existing disconnected and confused among the mass of vain and false ones which will take the possession of minds left in ignorance, can have little clearness, precision, and force of truth, for *any* application. A mind holding but a little of truth will, commonly, hold that little with both a feeble apprehension, and a great liability to have it perverted to subserve the errors which occupy that same mind. The *conjunction* of truths is of the utmost importance for preserving the genuine tendency, and securing the efficacy, of each. It is an unhappy "lack of knowledge" when there is not enough to preserve, to what there is of it, the honest beneficial quality of knowledge. How many of the follies, excesses, and crimes, in the course of the world, have taken their pre-

tended warrant from some fragment of truth, dissevered from the connexion of truths indispensable to its right operation, and in that detached state easily perverted into coalescence with the most noxious principles, which concealed and gave effect to their malignity under the plausibility thus acquired through the fallacious application of a truth.

There were many and melancholy exemplifications of all we have said of ignorance, in the conduct of that ancient people at present in our view. Doubtless, a formidable proportion of the iniquities which, by their necessary tendency and by the divine vindictive appointment, brought plagues and destruction upon them, were committed in violation of what they knew. But also it was in no small part from blindness to the manifestation of truth and duty incessantly confronting them, that they were betrayed into crimes and consequent miseries. This is evident equally from the language in which their prophets reproached them, and from the surprise which they sometimes seem to have felt on finding themselves involved in retributive suffering, for what they could not perceive to be at the worst any thing more than trifling negligences in their conduct. It appeared as if they had never so much as

dreamed of such a consequence; and their monitors had to represent to them, that it had been through their own stupid inattention to divine dictates and warnings, if they did not know that such proceedings would have such a termination.

How one portion of knowledge admitted, with the exclusion of other truths equally indispensable to be known, may not only be unavailing, but may in effect lend force to destructive error, is dreadfully illustrated in the final catastrophe of that favoured guilty nation. They were in possession of the one important point of knowledge, that a Messiah was to come. They held this assurance not slightly, but with strong conviction, and as a matter of the greatest interest. But then, that this knowledge might have its appropriate and happy effect, it was of essential necessity for them to know also the character of this Messiah, and the real nature of his great design. But this they closed up their understandings in a fatal contentment not to know. Literally the whole people, with an exception awfully diminutive, had failed, or rather refused, to admit, as to that part of the subject, the inspired declarations. Now comes the consequence of knowing only one thing of several that require to be inseparable in knowledge. They formed to themselves

a false idea of the Messiah, according to their own vain and worldly imaginations ; and they extended the full assurance which they justly entertained of his coming, to this false notion of what he was to be and to accomplish when he should come. From this it was natural and inevitable that when the true Messiah should come they would not recognise him, and that their hostility would be excited against a person who, while evidently the reverse of all their favourite and confident ideas of that glorious character, demanded to be acknowledged as realizing the declarations of heaven concerning it. And thus they were placed in an incomparably worse situation for receiving him when he did appear, than if they had had no knowledge at all that a Messiah was to come. For on that supposition they might have received him as a most striking moral phenomenon, with curiosity and wonder, and as little prejudice as it is possible in any case for depravity and ignorance to feel toward sanctity and wisdom. But this delusive pre-occupation of their minds formed a direct grand cause for their rejecting Jesus Christ. And how fearful was the final consequence of *this* "lack of knowledge !" How truly, in all senses, the people were destroyed ! The violent extermination at length of multitudes of them from the earth,

was but as the omen and commencement of a deeper perdition. And the terrible memorial is a perpetual admonition what a curse it is *not to know*. For He by the rejection of whom these despisers devoted themselves to perish, while he looked on their great city, and wept at the doom which he beheld impending, said, *If thou hadst known*, even thou in this thy day.—

So much for that selected people:—we may now cast a glance over the rest of the ancient world, as exemplifying the perniciousness of the want of knowledge.

The ignorance which pervaded the heathen nations, was fully equal to the utmost result that could have been calculated from all the causes contributing to thicken the mental darkness. The traditional glimmering of that knowledge which had been originally received by divine communication, had long since become nearly extinct, having as it were gone out in the act of lighting up certain fantastic inventions of doctrine, by ignition of an element exhaled from the corruptions of the human soul. In other words, the grand principles of truth, imparted by the Creator to the early inhabitants of the earth, had gradually lost their clearness and purity, and at length passed almost wholly out of knowledge, in transfusing somewhat of their semblance and

authority, through some slight deceptive analogy, into the vanities of fancy and notion which sprang from the inventive depravity of man. And thus, if we except so much instruction as we may conceive that the extraordinary and sometimes dreadful interpositions of the Governor of the world might convey, unaccompanied with declarations in language, (and it was in but an extremely limited degree that these had actually the effect of illumination,) the human tribes were surrendered to their own understanding for all that they were to know and think. Melancholy predicament! The understanding, the intellect, the reason, which had not sufficed even for seeing the necessity of preserving the true light from heaven, was to be competent to give light in its absence. Under the disadvantage of this loss—after the setting of the sun—it was to exercise itself on an unlimited diversity of important things, inquiring, comparing, and deciding. All those things, if examined far, extended into mystery. All genuine thinking was a hard repellent labour. Casual impressions had a mighty force of perversion. The senses were not a medium through which the intellect could receive ideas foreign to material existence. The appetites and passions would infallibly occupy and actuate the whole man. When his imagination was put in activity,

its gleams and meteors would be any thing rather than lights of truth. His interest, according to his gross apprehension of it, would in numberless instances require, and therefore would gain, false judgments for justification of the wrong manner of pursuing that interest. And all this while, there was no grand standard and test to which the notions of things could be brought. If there were some spirits of larger and purer thought, that went out in the honest search of truth, they must have felt an oppression of utter hopelessness in looking round on a world of doubtful things, on no one of which they could obtain the dictate of a supreme intelligence. There was no sovereign demonstrator in communication with the earth, to tell wretched man what to think in any of a thousand questions which arose to confound him. There were, instead, impostors, magicians, vain theorists, prompted by ambition and superior native ability to abuse the credulity of their fellow mortals, which they did with such success as to become their oracles, their dictators, or even their gods. The multitude most naturally surrendered themselves to all such delusions. If it was, perhaps, possible that their feeble and degraded reason, in the absence of divine light, and but little disciplined by education, might by earnest exertion have attained in

some small degree to judge better, that exertion was precluded by indolence, by the immediate wants and unavoidable employments of life, by love of amusement, by subjection, even of the mind, to superiors and national institutions, and by the tendency of human individuals to fall, if we may so express it, in dead conformity and addition to the lump.

The result of all these causes, the sum of all these effects, was that unnumbered millions of living beings, whose value was in their intelligent and moral nature, were, as to that nature, in a condition analogous to what their physical existence would have been under a total and permanent eclipse of the sun. It was perpetual night in their souls, with all the phenomena incident to night. As to their material existence, the realities of the economy with which that was connected pressed on their sense ; nature presented to them its open and brightened aspect ; there was a true light coming on them every morning in beams from the sky ; they saw one order of things aright, —that which they were soon to leave, and look back upon as a dream when one awaketh. But there was subsisting, present with them, unapprehended except in faint and delusive glimpses, another order of things involving their greatest interests, with no luminary to make that apparent to them, after the race had

willingly forgotten the primary instructions from their Creator.

The dreadful consequences of this “lack of knowledge,” as appearing in the religion and morals of the nations, and through these affecting their welfare, equalled and even surpassed all that might by theory have been presaged from the cause.

This ignorance could not annihilate the *principle* of religion in the spirit of man; but in removing the awful repression of the idea of one exclusive sovereign Divinity, it left that spirit to form its religion in its own manner. And as the creating of gods might be the most appropriate way of celebrating the deliverance from the most imposing idea of one Supreme Being, depraved and insane invention took this direction with ardour. The mind threw a fictitious divinity into its own phantasms, and into the objects in the visible world. It is amazing to observe how, when one solemn principle was taken away, the promiscuous numberless crowd of almost all shapes of fancy and of matter became, as it were, instinct with ambition, and mounted into gods. They were alternately the toys and the tyrants of their miserable creator. They appalled him often, and often he could make sport with them. For overawing him by their supposed power, they made him a

compensation by descending to a fellowship with his follies and vices. But indeed this was a condition of their creation; they *must* own their mortal progenitor by sharing his depravity, even amidst the lordly domination over him and the universe. We may safely affirm, that the mighty artificer of deifications, the corrupt soul of man, never once, in its almost infinite diversification of device in their production, struck out a form of absolute goodness. No, if there were ten thousand deities, there should not be one that should be authorized by perfect rectitude in itself to punish *him*; not one by which it should be possible for him to be rebuked without having a right to recriminate.

Such a pernicious creation of active delusions it was that took the place of religion in the absence of knowledge. And to this intellectual obscuration, and this legion of pestilent fallacies, swarming like the locusts from the smoke of the bottomless pit in the vision of St. John, the fatal effect on morals and happiness corresponded. Indeed the mischief done there perhaps even exceeded the proportion of the ignorance and the false theology; conformably to the general rule, that any thing wrong in the mind will be the *most* wrong where it comes the nearest to its ultimate practical effect—except when in this

operation outward it is met and checked by some foreign counteraction.

The people of those nations (and the same description is applicable to modern heathens) did not know the essential nature of perfect goodness, or virtue. How should they know it? A depraved mind would not find in itself any native conception to give the bright form of it. There were no living examples of it. The men who held the pre-eminence in the community were generally, in the most important points, its reverse. It was for the *Divine* nature to have presented, in a manifestation of itself, the archetype of the idea of perfect rectitude, whence might have been derived the modified exemplar for human virtue. And so *would* the idea of perfect moral excellence have come to dwell and shine in the understanding, if it had been the True Divinity that men beheld in their contemplations of a superior existence. But when the gods of their heaven were little better than their own evil qualities, exalted to the sky to be thence reflected back upon them invested with Olympian charms and splendours, their ideas of deity would evidently combine with the causes which made it impossible for them to conceive a perfect model for human excellence. See the mighty labour of human depravity to confirm its dominion! It would translate

itself to heaven, and usurp divinity, in order to come down thence with a sanction for man to be wicked,—in order, by a falsification of the qualities of the Supreme Nature, to preclude his forming the true idea of what would be perfect rectitude in his own.

A system which could thus associate all the modes of turpitude with the most lofty and illustrious forms of existence, would go far toward vitiating essentially the entire theory of moral good and evil. And it would in a great measure defraud of their practical efficacy any just principles that might, after all, maintain their place in the convictions of the understanding, and assert their claim with a voice which not even all this ruination could silence.

But, how small was the number of pure moral principles, (if indeed any,) that among the people of the heathen nations *did* maintain themselves in the convictions of the understanding. The privation of divine light gave full freedom, if there was any disposition to take such license, for every perverse speculation which could operate toward abolishing those principles in the natural reason of the species. The disposition there would be to take it may be imagined, when the abolishing of those principles was evidently to be also the destruction of all intrinsic authority in the

practical rules founded on them, which destruction would confer an exemption infinitely desirable. The freedom for such thinking would infallibly be taken, in its utmost extent; and in fact the speculation was stimulated by so mighty a force of the depraved passions, that it went far beyond the primary intention: it not only annulled the right principles and rules, but created opposite ones, so that the name and repute of virtues were given to iniquities without number. It is deplorable to consider how large a proportion of all the vices and crimes of which mankind were ever guilty, have actually constituted, in some or other of their tribes and ages, a part of the approved moral and religious system. It is questionable whether we could select from the worst forms of turpitude any one which has not been at least admitted among the authorized customs, if not even appointed among the institutes of the religion, of some portion of the human race. And depravities thus become licensed or sacred, would have a fatal facility of communicating somewhat of their quality to all the other parts of the moral system. The sanction thus impressed on their character, while it would strengthen their principle of infection, would so beguile away all repugnance and counteraction, that the rest of the customs and

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institutes would readily admit the contamination, and become assimilated in evil; as the Mahomedans have no care to avoid contact with their neighbours who are ill of the plague, since the plague has the warrant of heaven. Wherever, therefore, in the imperfect notices afforded us of ancient nations, we find any one virulent iniquity holding an authorized place in custom or religion, we may confidently make a very large inference, though the record be silent, as to the corresponding quality pervading the remainder of the moral system of those nations. Indeed the inference is equally justified whether we regard such a sanction and establishment of a flagrant iniquity as a cause, or as an effect. Suppose it to *precede* the completed corruption of morals,—and how rapidly would it precipitate their progress to the last depravation. Suppose it to be, (which is the more natural order,) itself the result and completion of that corruption,—how vicious must have been that previous state which naturally led to such an enormity; which attained but its appropriate growth and consummation in precisely the inversion of an essential eternal law of morality.

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Every thing that, under the advantage of this destitution of knowledge, operated to the

destruction of the true morality, both in theory and practice, must have had a fatal reinforcement of its power in that part especially of this ignorance which respected hereafter. The doctrine of a future existence and retribution did not, in any rational and salutary form, interfere in the adjustment of the economy of life. The faint shadow which there was of such a notion in the minds of the pagans, was too fantastic in its conception, and indeed too little entertained as a serious belief, either to lend an alliance to preserve uncorrupt and efficacious that sense of what was right and what was wrong which might be supposed naturally inherent in a rational being, even though uninformed of a future state; or to bring a supplemental, clearer, more cogent, set of moral discriminations and prescriptions founded upon itself, that is, upon this doctrine itself of a future existence. In other words, this notion, or fancy, in the minds of those heathens, was not noble enough, nor defined enough, nor convincing enough, either to keep them in a more faithful recognition of what was morally better and worse by the very constitution of their being, however brief might be its duration, or to enforce, in addition, on their judgment and conscience, those laws of virtue

which are obligatory from the circumstance that there is a future life.

Imagine, if you can, the withdrawment of this doctrine from the faith of those who have a solemn persuasion of it as a part of revealed truth. Suppose the grand idea either wholly obliterated, or faded into a shadowy and dubious trace of what it had been, or transmuted into a poetic dream of classic or barbarian mythology,—and how many moral principles would be found to have vanished with it. How many things, before rendered imperative by this great article of faith, would have ceased to be duties, or would continue such only on the strength, and to the extent of the requirement, of some very minor consideration which might remain to enforce them, and that probably in a modified and deteriorated form. In recognizing some remaining quality of a duty in a number of things which could retain any such quality only by virtue of a close relation to the matter of benefit or mischief of the most obvious and tangible kind, the sense of obligation would be reduced to a vulgar and reptile principle. The best of its strength, and all its dignity, would be departed from it when it could refer no more to eternity, an invisible world, and a judgment to come. It would therefore

have none of that emphasis of impression which can sometimes dismay and quell the most violent passions, as by the mysterious awe of the presence of a spirit. It would be deprived of that which forms the chief power of conscience. And it would be impotent in any attempt—if so absurd an attempt could be dreamed of—to uphold, in the more dignified character of *principle*, that care of what is right which would be constantly degenerating into mere policy, and rationally justifying in doing so. ied

The withdrawment, we said, of the grand truth in question, from a man's faith, would necessarily break up the government over his conscience. How evident then is it, that among the people of the heathen lands, under a disastrous ignorance of this and all the other sublime truths that are the most fit to rule an immortal being during his sojourn on earth, no man could feel any peremptory obligation to be universally virtuous, or adequate motives to excite an endeavour to approach that high attainment, even were there not a perfect inability to form the true conception of it. And then how much of course it was, that the general mass would be dreadfully depraved. Upstart used Though a momentary surprise may at times have seized us on the occurrence, in their history, of some transcendent

and monstrous form of flagitiousness, we do not wonder at beholding a state of the people such in its general character as the sacred writers exhibit, in descriptions to which the other records of antiquity add their confirming testimony and ample illustrations. For, while the immense aggregate is displayed to the mental view, as all pervaded, agitated, and stimulated, by the restless forces of appetites and passions, and those forces operating with perverted impulse, let it be asked what kinds and measure of restraint there should be upon such a world of creatures so actuated, to keep them from rushing in all ways into evil. Imagine them (if that be a fiction of easy conception) placed under an adjustment of restraints quite competent to the purpose. Then take off any of these, to see what will follow. Take off, at last, all the coercion that can be applied through the belief of a judgment to come, and a future state of retribution;—by doing which you would also empower the race to defy the Supreme Governor, if any idea of him could be supposed to remain. All these sacred bonds of restraint being thus dissolved, behold this countless multitude abandoned to be carried or driven the whole length to which the impulses of their appetites and passions would go,—unless, to encounter them, and impose

a limitation, there shall be some counteracting principle remaining or supplied after the superior restraints are annihilated. And *what* will so remain or be supplied, to repel these depraved and violent powers from accomplishing the whole evil to which they tend? The main thing in reserve for such contravention is exactly this,—the resistance which men's self-interest opposes to one another's bad inclinations. And it is rather a gloomy and humiliating spectacle, to be offered by a world of rational and moral agents, if we see that, instead of a repression of the propensity to wickedness by reverence of the Sovereign Judge, and the anticipation of a future life, there is merely an arrest put upon its external activity, and that by the force of men's fears of one another. But to this it was, as the only strong restraint, that those heathens were left by their ignorance of God and a future existence and judgment.

Not but that it has been, in all nations and times, of infinite practical service that there is involved in the constitution of the moral world a law by which a coarse self-interest thus interposes to obstruct in a degree the violent propensity to evil; for it has, under Providence, prevented more actual mischief, beyond comparison more, than all other causes together. The man inclined to perpetrate an

iniquity, of the nature of a wrong to his fellow-mortals, is apprised that he shall provoke a reaction, to resist or punish him ; that he shall incur as great an evil as that he is disposed to do, or greater ; that either a revenge regardless of all formalities of justice will strike him, or a process instituted in organized society will vindictively reach his property, liberty, or life. This defensive array, of all men against all men, compels to remain shut up within the mind an immensity of wickedness which is there burning to come out into action. But for this, Noah's flood had been rendered needless. But for this, our planet might have been accomplishing its circles round the sun for thousands of years past without a human inhabitant. Through the effect of this essential law in the social economy, it was possible for the race to subsist, notwithstanding all that ignorance of the Divine Being, of heavenly truth, and of uncorrupt morality, in which we are contemplating the heathen nations as benighted. But while thus it prevented utter destruction, it had no corrective operation on the depravity of the heart. It was not through a judgment of things being essentially evil that they were forborne ; it was not by the power of conscience that wicked propensity was kept under restraint. It was only by a hold on the meaner

principles of his nature, that the offender in will was arrested in prevention of the deed. And so the race were such virtually, as they would have hastened to become actually could they have ceased to be afraid of one another's strength and retaliation.*

And even this restraint imposed by mutual apprehension, important as its operation was in the absence of nobler influences, was yet of miserably partial efficacy. Men were continually breaking through this protective provision, and committed against one another a stupendous amount of crimes. And no wonder, when we consider that the evil passions, endowed as they seem to be with a portentous excess of vigour by the very circumstance of *being* evil, (as the demoniacs were the strongest of men,) are exasperated the more by a certain degree of awe impressed on them by the defensive attitude of their objects. When strength so great might thus be irritated to greater, and when there were no "powers of the world to come," to invade the dreadful cavern of iniquity in the mind, and there to combat and subdue it, there would often be no want of the audacity

• It is not very uncommon to hear credit given to human nature, apparently in sober simplicity, for the whole amount of the negation of bad actions *thus* prevented, as just so much genuine virtue, by some dealers in moral and theological speculation.

to send it forth into action at all hazards, and in defiance and contempt of the restraining force which operated through mutual fear of vindictive reaction.

But it may be said, perhaps, that in thus representing the people who were destitute of divine knowledge as left with hardly any other control on their bad dispositions than one of a quality little more dignified than fetters literally restraining the limbs, we are wilfully underrating what there was among them to take effect in the way of *instruction*. Even this coarse principle of control itself, it may be alleged, this prudence of reciprocal fear, became refined into something worthier of moral agents. For it passed, by a rational compromise among the species, from the form of individual self-defence and revenge into that of institutions of *law*; and legislation, it will be said, is a *teacher of morals*. Retaining, indeed, the rough expedient of physical force, in readiness to coerce or punish where it cannot deter by warning, it yet strongly endeavours the repression of evil emotions by means of right *principles*, marked out, explained, and inculcated. It *teaches* these principles as dictates of reason and justice, while it embodies them in the authority of enactments. There was therefore, it may be pleaded, as much *instruction* among the ancient heathens as there was legislation.

In answer to this, we need not dwell on the consideration of what would necessarily be the quality of principles and precepts enunciated by legislators who themselves, in common with the people of their nations, looked on human existence and duty through a worse than twilight medium ; who had no divine oracles to speak wisdom to them, and were, some of them, reduced to begin their operations with the lie that pretended they had such oracles. Nor need we to insist on the obvious fact, of the evil that would be involved in the very efficacy of some of their maxims and injunctions, as being at variance with eternal rectitude. It is enough to observe, on the claims of legislation to the character of a moral preceptor, that it retained so palpably, after all, the nature of the gross element from which it was a refinement or transmutation, that even what it might teach right, as to the matter, it was unable to teach with the right moral impression. With all its gravity, and phrases of wisdom, and show of homage to virtue, it was, and was plainly descried to be, that very same *Noli me tangere*, in a disguised form ; a less provoking and hostile manner only of keeping up the state of preparation for defensive war. Every one knew right well that the pure approbation and love

of goodness were not the source of law ; but that it was an arrangement originating and deriving all its force from self-interest ; a contrivance by which each man was glad to make the collective strength of society his guarantee against his neighbour's interest and wish to do him wrong. While pleased that others were under this restraint, he was often vexed at being under it also himself ; but on the whole deemed this security worth the cost of suffering the interdict on his own inclinations,—perhaps as believing other men's to be still worse than his, or seeing their strength to be greater. We repeat that a preceptive system thus estimated could not, even had the principles to which it gave expression, in the mandates of law, been no other than those of the soundest morality, have impressed them with the weight of sanctity on the conscience. And all this but tends to shew the necessity that the rules and sanctions of morality, to come with simplicity and power on the human mind, should primarily emanate from a Being exalted above all implication and competition of interests with man.

Thus we see, that the pagan ignorance precluded one grand requisite for crushing the dominion of iniquity ; for there was nothing

to insinuate or to force its way into the recesses of the soul, to apply *there* a repressive power to the depraved ardour which glowed in the passions. That was left, inaccessible and inextinguishable, as the subterranean fires in a volcanic region. And in the mighty impulse to evil with which it was continually operating as an energy of feeling, it compelled the subservience of the intellect; and thus combined the passions with a faculty skilful to guide their direction, to diversify their objects, to invent expedients, and to seize and create occasions. What was it that this intelligent depravity would stop short of accomplishing? Reflect on the extent of human genius, in its powers of invention, combination, and adaptation; and then think of all this faculty, in an immense number of minds, through many ages, and in every imaginable variety of situation, exerted with unremitting activity in aid of the bad propensities. Reflect how many ideas, apt and opportune for this service, would spring up casually, or be suggested by circumstances, or be attained by the earnest study of beings goaded in pursuit of change and novelty. The simple modes of iniquity were put under an active ministry of art, to combine, innovate, and augment. And so indefatigable was its exercise, that almost all conceivable

forms of immorality were brought to imagination, most of them into experiment, and the greater number into prevailing practice, in those nations: insomuch that the sated monarch would have imposed as difficult a task on ingenuity in calling for the invention of a new vice, as of a new pleasure. They would perhaps have been identical demands when he was the person to be pleased.

In this manner the absence of knowledge was a cause, and added in an unknown measure to the strength of all other causes, operating to render the heathen nations so excessively corrupt. And if this depravity of a world of moral agents did not, contemplated simply as a destruction of their *rectitude*, appear equivalent to the gravest import of the terms “the people are destroyed,” the *misery* inseparable from the depravity instantly comes in our view to complete their verification.

We are aware that the wickedness and misery of the ancient world, as asserted in illustration of the natural effect of estrangement from divine truth, are apt to be regarded as of the order of topics which have dwindled into insignificance, worn out by being repeated just because they have often been repeated

before; a sort of exhausted quarries and dried-up wells. There is a certain class of vain and sneering mortals, in whose conceit nothing is such proof of superior sense as discarding the greatest number of topics and arguments as obsolete or impertinent. It is to be reckoned on that some of these, upon hearing again the old maxims, that a people without divine instruction must be a vicious one, and that a vicious people must be an unhappy one,—and those maxims accompanied with a description of the old pagan world as illustrative evidence,—will be prompt to let forth their comments in some such strain as the following:—“ The
 “ state of the ancient heathens, thus brought
 “ upon us in one cheap declamation more,
 “ is now a matter of trivial import, just fit
 “ to give some show and exaggeration to a
 “ common-place. They might be wretched
 “ enough; and perhaps also the matter has
 “ been extravagantly magnified for the service of a favourite theme, or to afford indulgence to rhetorical excess. At any rate,
 “ it is not now worth while to go so far back
 “ to concern ourselves about it. The ancient
 “ heathens had their day and their destiny,
 “ and it is of very little importance to us what
 “ they were or suffered.”

It is fortunate, we may reply, to be “ wiser

than the ancients," without the trouble of *learning* any thing by means of them. It is fortunate, also, to have ascertained how much of all that ever existed can teach us nothing; though it is certainly not a little strange, that so ample a volume of the story of our race *should* be found to contain nothing worthy to keep it open before us any longer. We have truly a signal improvement in the fashion of wisdom, when that high endowment may be possessed as a thing quite distinct from compass of thought, from study of causes and effects as illustrated on the great scale, from aptitude to be instructed by the past, and from contemplation of the divine government as one system from the beginning to the end. But indeed, this being wise without being ever the wiser for the past, is not a privilege peculiar to this later day. In any former age there were men in sufficient number who were wise enough to be indifferent to all but immediate passing events, as knowing no lessons that persons like them had to learn from remoter views, extending either into the past or the future; who could even have before them the very monuments of awful events that were gone by, without perceiving inscribed on them any characters for contemplation to read. It is not impossible there might be persons so exclusively occu-

pied with contemporary occurrences and topics, so uninterested by any thing not subservient to immediate pursuits, that they could plan their schemes, and debate their questions, and even follow their amusements, quite exempt from solemn reflections, within view of the ruins of Jerusalem, after the Roman legions had left it and its myriads of dead to silence. Any reference to that dreadful spectacle, as an example of the consequences of the wickedness of a people, might have been heard with unconcern, and lightly passed off as foreign to the matters requiring their attention : it was all over with the people dead, and the people alive had their own concerns to mind. But would not exactly such as these have been the men most likely to fall into the vices and impieties which would provoke the next avenging visitation, and to perish in it? In all times, the triflers with the great exemplifications of the connexion of depravity with misery and ruin, who thought it but an impertinent moralizing that attempted to recall such funereal spectacles for admonition, were fools, whatever self-complacency they might feel in a habit of thinking more fitted, they would perhaps say, for making our best advantage of the world as we find it. And we of the present time are convicted of exceeding stupidity, if we

think it not worth while to go a number of ages back to contemplate the mass of mankind, the wide world of beings such as ourselves, sunk in darkness and wretchedness, and to consider what it is that is taught by so melancholy an exhibition. What is to give fulness of evidence to an instruction, if a world be too narrow; what is to give it weight, if a world be too light?

It is to be acknowledged, that the mental darkness which we are representing as so greatly the cause of the wickedness and unhappiness of those nations of old, had the effect of protecting them, in a measure, from some kinds of suffering. They had not, as we have been observing, illumination enough, to have conscience enough, for inflicting the severest pains of remorse; and for oppressing them with a distinct alarming apprehension of a future account. But that they were wretched, was practically acknowledged in the very quality of what they ardently and universally sought as the highest felicities of existence. Those delights were violent and tumultuous, in all possible ways and degrees estranged from reflection, and adverse to it. The whole souls of great and small, in the most barbarous and in the more polished state, were passionately set upon re-

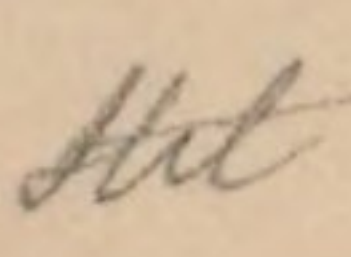
velry, upon expedients for inflaming the
 indulgences of licentiousness to extravagance,
 madness, and monstrous enormity; upon
 concourses of multitudes for pomps, celebra-
 tions, shows, games, combats; upon the riots
 of exultation and revenge after victories. The
 ruder nations had, in their way, however
 pitiable in their attempts at magnificence,
 their grand festive, triumphal, and demoniac
 confluxes and revellings. To these joys of
 tumult, the people of the savage and the more
 cultivated nations sacrificed every thing be-
 longing to the peaceful economy of life, with
 a desperate frantic fury. And all this was
 the confession that there was little felicity
 in the heart or in the home. Nor could all
 this be itself happiness: even if the vain
 elation could be called so while it lasted, it
 was brief in each instance, and it subsided in
 an aggravated dreariness of the soul.

The fact of their being unhappy had a still
 more gloomy attestation in the mutual enmity
 which seems to have been of the very essence
 of life, so vital a principle that it could not
 be spared for an hour. No, they could not
 live without this luxury drawn from the foun-
 tains of death! What is the most conspi-
 cuous material of ancient history, what is it
 that glares out the most hideously from that
 darkness and oblivion in which the old world

is veiling its aspect, but the incessant furies of miserable mortals against their fellow-mortals, "hateful and hating one another?" We cannot look that way but we see the whole field covered with inflictors and sufferers, not seldom interchanging those characters. If that field widens to our view, it is still, to the utmost line to which the shade clears away, a scene of cruelty, oppression, and slavery; of the strong trampling on the weak, and the weak often attempting to bite at the feet of the strong; of rancorous animosities and murderous competitions of persons raised above the mass of the community; of treacheries and massacres; and of war, between hordes, and cities, and nations, and empires, war *never*, in spirit, intermitted, and suspended sometimes in act only to acquire renewed force for destruction, or to find another assemblage of hated creatures to cut in pieces. Powerful as "the spirit of the first-born Cain" has continued, down to our own age, and in the most improved division of mankind, there was nevertheless, in the ancient pagan race, (as there is in some portions of the modern,) a more complete, uncontrolled actuation of the all-killing, all-devouring fury, a more absolute possession of Moloch.

Now it is *as misery* that we are exhibiting

all this depravity. To be thus, *was suffering*. The disease and the pain are inseparable in the description, and they were so in the reality. And both together, inevitably seiz-


ing on beings who had rejected or lost divine knowledge, maintained a hold as fatal and invincible as that of the interwoven serpents of Laocoon.

It is true, that a comprehensive estimate of the state of the people we are contemplating, would bring to view several minor circumstances which, though not availing to change materially the effect of the picture, are themselves of less gloomy colour. But then it is equally true, that such an estimate would also include other forms of infelicity, in addition to those which, as inseparable from being wicked, were the stings by

which sin rewarded the infatuation that would cherish it. If the design had been to exhibit any thing like a general view, we must have taken account of such particulars as these : the unhappiness of being without an assurance of an all-comprehending and merciful Providence, and of wanting therefore the best support in sorrow and calamity ; the insuppressible impatience, or the deep melancholy, with which the more thoughtful persons must have seen departing from life, with no anticipation approaching to a defined

hope of ever meeting them in a life elsewhere, the relatives or associates who were dear to them in exception to the prevailing selfishness and hostility; and the gloomy sentiment with which they must have thought of their own continual approach toward death; a sentiment not always unaccompanied with certain intimidating hints and hauntings of possibilities in the darkness beyond that confine. But the more limited intention in the preceding description has been to illustrate their unhappiness as inflicted by their depravity,—as suffered in the very fact of their being so depraved;—the depravity being at the same time affirmed to have been inseparable from their ignorance. And what words so true, so irresistibly prompted at the view of such a scene, as those pronounced of a nation that at once despised the pagans and imitated them,—“The people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

We assure ourselves of not incurring the imputation of having lost sight of the fact, that vice and misery have, in our nature, a deeper source than ignorance; or of being so absurd as to imagine that if the inestimable truths unknown to the heathen world had, on the contrary, been in all men's knowledge, but a slight portion of the depravity

and wretchedness we have described could then have had an existence. To say, that under long absence of the sun any tract of terrestrial nature *must infallibly* be reduced to desolation, is not to say or imply, that under the benignant influence of that luminary the same region must, as necessarily and unconditionally, be a scene of beauty; but the only hope, for the only possibility, is in the field visited by much of that sweet influence. And it were an absurdity no less gross in the opposite extreme to the one just mentioned, to deny, that something of the highest importance toward the desired effect in the moral world is accomplished, if it is made sure that the impulses of a corrupt will shall be encountered, as Balaam met the angel, by a clear manifestation of their bad and ruinous tendency, by a convinced judgment, a protesting conscience, and the aspect of the Almighty Judge,—instead of their being under the tolerance of a judgment not instructed to condemn them, or, (as ignorance is sure to quicken into error,) perverted to reinforce them by its sanction.

SECTION II.

Brief review of the ignorance prevailing through the ages subsequent to those of ancient history.—State of the popular mind in Christendom during the complete reign of Popery.—Supposed reflections of a Protestant in one of our ancient splendid structures for ecclesiastical use.—Slow progress of the Reformation, in its effect on the understandings of the people.—Their barbarous ignorance even in the time of Elizabeth, notwithstanding the intellectual and literary glories of this country in that period.—Sunk in ignorance still in the boasted age of Addison, Pope, &c.—Strange insensibility of the cultivated part of the nation with regard to the mental and moral condition of the rest.—Almost heathen ignorance with respect to Religion at the time when Whitefield and Wesley began to excite the attention of the multitude to that subject.—Signs and means of a change for the better in recent times.

FROM this view of the prevalence and malignant effects of ignorance among the people of the ancient world, both Jews and Gentiles,

(a limited and insufficient view indeed, yet amplified beyond the due proportion to our design,) we may come down, with a few brief notices in passing over the long subsequent periods, toward our own times. And in these transient notices, it will be as well to decline taking the circuitous course through the immense dark scenes of later Judaism and Paganism,—an enormous amplitude of the profoundest gloom.—But by this time we are become almost afraid of accepting the epithets of description and aggravation, which the language offers as it were in spontaneous adaptation to the subject. For there are many most self-complacent persons whose range of mental vision is so narrow, (or is it rather that their range is stupendously large, insomuch that centuries, millenniums, and a world of intelligent creatures, must shrink to diminutiveness in taking a just proportion upon their scale of thought?)—we repeat, whose minds apprehend so little of that which constitutes the greatness of any object, that strong terms accumulated on even a subject like this, offend them as declamatory exaggeration. Let it then be just observed, without one ambitious epithet, that since that period when ancient history, strictly so named, left off describing the state of mankind, far more, unquestionably, than a

myriad of millions of our race have been on earth and quitted it without one ray of the knowledge the most important to spirits sojourning here, and going hence.

We shall not pursue, over this dreary ground, our object of shewing what a destructive thing is ignorance. We only remark, that an important truth taught by the demonstration of facts, should as much as possible come to us with the weight of all the facts that ever *did* demonstrate it. And it is no wonder that such a truth should strike with little sense of its importance on minds too contracted, or too listless, for the survey of the vast extent of its exemplifications.

Neither is it necessary to do more than just name the Mahomedan imposture, though that is perhaps the most signal instance within all time, of a malignant delusion maintained directly and immediately by ignorance, by a solemn determination and even a fanatic zeal not to receive one new idea. Tenets involving the most palpable impossibilities, and asserted in self-contradictory terms, must stand inviolable to all question or controversy ; literature must be scouted as a profane folly ; not a principle of true philosophy is to be admitted ; hardly is an application of the plainest mechanics to improve a machine or implement to be tolerated ; or an infidel

pardoned for a successful obtrusion of science to render the most important service,—to save, for instance, a Mussulman ship with its proud besotted commander and crew from destruction; lest one momentary surmise of imperfection might insult the all-sufficiency and sanctity of the unalterable creed and institutes; lest any diminutive crevice should be made in the temple of the vile superstition, for the passage of one glimpse of true light to annoy the foul fiend that dwells there, invested “in the dunnest smoke of hell.” Not, however, that this is the policy of doubt and apprehension, the evading and repelling caution of men who suspect themselves to be wrong and dread being forced to meet the proof. For, the subjects of this execrable usurpation on the human understanding have, in general, the firmest assurance that all things in the system are right: it has itself secured them against *knowing* any thing that could discompose their sense of certainty. No fell savage, or serpent, or monster, ever had a more perfect instinct to avail itself of an impervious obscurity for its lurking place, than this imposture has shewn to keep out all mental light from its realm. The delusion is so strong and absolute in ignorance, is so identified with it, and so systematically repels at all points the approach of knowledge, that

it is difficult to conceive a mode of its extermination that shall not involve some fearful destruction, in the most literal sense, of the people whom it possesses. And such a catastrophe it is probable the great body of them, in the temper of mind prevailing among them at this hour, would choose to incur by preference, we do not say to a serious patient consideration of the true religion, but even to the admission among them of a system merely favouring knowledge in general, an order of measures which should urge upon the adults, and peremptorily enforce for the children, a discipline of intellectual improvement. There would be little national hesitation of choice, (at least in the central regions of the dominion of this hateful imposture,) between the introduction of any general system of expedients for driving them from their stupefaction into something like thinking and learning, and a general plague, to rage as long as any remained for victims.

But let us now look at the intellectual state of the people denominated Christian, during the long course of ages preceding the Reformation. The acquisition made by earth from heaven, of Christianity, might have seemed to bring with it an inevitable necessity of an immense difference speedily and for perma-

nence taking place, in regard to the competence of men's knowledge to prevent their destruction. It was as if, in the physical system, some one production, far more salutary to life than all the other things furnished from the elements, had been reserved by the Creator to spring up in a later age, after many generations of men had been languishing through life, and prematurely dying, from the deficient virtue of their sustenance and remedies. The image of the inestimable plant had been shewn to the prophets in their visions, but the reality was now given to the world; it had "the seed in itself," was of "wholly a right seed," and claimed to be cultivated by the people, who in every land were suffering the maladies which it was endowed with properties to heal. But, while by the greater part of mankind it was not accounted worth admission to a place on their blasted desolated soil, the manner in which its virtue was frustrated among those who pretended to esteem it, as it was, the best gift of the divine beneficence, is recorded in eternal reproach of the christian nations.

As the hostility of heathenism, in the direct endeavours to extirpate the christian religion, became evidently hopeless, in the nations within the Roman empire, there was a grand

change of the policy of evil ; and all manner of reprobate things, heathenism itself among them, rushed as by general conspiracy into treacherous conjunction with christianity, retaining their own quality under the sanction of its name, and by a rapid process reducing it to surrender almost every thing distinctive of it but that dishonoured name. There were indeed in existence the inspired oracles, and these could not be essentially falsified. But there was no lack of expedients and pretexts for keeping them in a great measure secreted. It might be done under a pretence that reverence for their sanctity required they should be secluded as within the recesses of a temple, nor be there consulted but by consecrated personages ; a pretence excellently adapted for effect, since it was by its very nature its own security against exposure, the people being thus kept unaware that the sacred writings themselves expressly invited popular inspection, by declaring themselves addressed to mankind at large. And while the deceivers had specious pretexts to cover their management, they were not worse off for the other facilities. In the progress of translation, the holy scriptures could be arrested and stopped short in a language but little less unintelligible than the original ones to the bulk of the people, in order that

this “profane vulgar” might never hear the very words of God, but only such report as it should please certain men, at their discretion, to give of what he had said. But even though the people had understood the language, in the usage of social converse, there was a grand security against them in keeping them so destitute of the knowledge of letters, that the Bible, if such a rare thing ever did happen to fall into any of their hands, would be no more to them than a scroll of hieroglyphics. When to this was added, the great cost of a copy of so large a book before the invention of printing, it remained perhaps just worth while, (and it would be a matter of no difficulty or daring,) to make it, in the maturity of the system, an offence, and a sacrilegious invasion of sacerdotal privilege, to look into a bible. If it might seem hard thus to constitute a new sin, in addition to the long list already denounced by the divine law, amends were made by indulgently rescinding some articles in that list, and qualifying the rules of obligation with respect to them all.

In this latency of the sacred authorities, withdrawn from all communication with the human understanding, there were retained still many of the terms and names appropriate to religion. They remained, but they remained only such as they could be when

the departing spirit of that religion was leaving them void of their import and solemnity, and so applicable to purposes of deception and mischief. They were as holy vessels, in which the original contents might, as they were escaping, be clandestinely replaced by the most malignant preparations. And as crafty and wicked men had a most direct interest in this substitution, the pernicious operation went on incessantly; and with an ability, and to an extent, evincing that the utmost barbarism of the times cannot extinguish genius when it is iniquity that sets it on fire. How prolific was the invention of the falsehoods and absurdities of notion, and of the vanities and corruptions of practice, which it was devised to make the terms and names of religion designate and sanction; while it was also managed, with no less sedulity and success, that the inventors and propagators should be held in submissive reverence by the community, as the oracular depositaries of truth. That community had not knowledge enough of any other kind, to create a resisting and defensive power against this imposition in the concern of religion. A sound exercise of reason on subjects out of that province, a moderate degree of instruction in literature and science rightly so called, might have produced, in the persons of supe-

rior native capacity, a competence to question, to examine, to call for evidence, and to detect some of the fallacies imposed for christian faith. But in such completeness of ignorance, the general mind was on all sides pressed and borne down to its fate. All reaction ceased; and the people were reduced to exist in one huge, unintelligent, monotonous substance, united by the interfusion of a vile superstition, which permitted just enough mental life in the mass to accommodate it to all the uses of cheats and tyrants,—a proper subject for the dominion of “our Lord God the Pope,” as he was sometimes denominated; and might have been denominated without exciting indignation, in the hearing of millions of beings bearing the form of men and the name of Christians.

Reflect that all this took place under the nominal ascendancy of the best and brightest economy of instruction from heaven. Reflect that it was in nations where even the sovereign authority professed homage to the religion of Christ, and adopted and enforced it as a grand national institution, that the popular mass was thus reduced to a material fit for all the bad uses to which priestcraft could wish to put the souls and bodies of its slaves. And then consider what *should* have been the condition of this great aggregate, wherever

christianity was acknowledged by all as the true religion. The people *should* have consisted of so many beings having each, in some degree, the independent beneficial use of his *mind*; all of them trained with a reference to the necessity of their being made sensible of their responsibility to their Creator, for the exercise of their reason on the matters of belief and choice; all of them capacitated for improvement by being furnished with the rudiments and instrumental means of knowledge; and all having within their easy reach, in their own language, the scriptures of divine truth.

Can any doubt arise, whether there were in the christian states resources competent, if so applied, to secure to all the people an elementary instruction, and the possession of the Bible? Resources competent! All nations, sufficiently raised above perfect barbarism to exist as states, have in all ages consumed, in some way or other else than they should, an infinitely greater amount of means than would have sufficed, after comfortable physical subsistence was provided for, to afford a moderate share of instruction to all the people. And in those popish ages, that expenditure alone which went to ecclesiastical use, would have been far more than adequate to this beneficent purpose. Think

of the boundless cost for supporting the magnificence and satiating the rapacity of the hierarchy, from its triple-crowned head, down through all the orders consecrated under that head to maintain the delusion and share the spoil. Recollect the immense system of policy for jurisdiction and intrigue, every agent of which was a consumer. Recollect the pomps and pageants, for which the general resources were to be taxed; while the general industry was injured by the interruption of useful employment, and the diversion of the people to such dissipation as their condition qualified them to indulge in. Think also of the incalculable cost of ecclesiastical structures, the temples of idolatry, as in truth they may be adjudged to have been. One of the most striking situations for a religious and reflective protestant is, that of passing some solitary hour under the lofty vault, among the superb arches and columns, of any one of the most splendid of these edifices remaining at this day in our own country. If he has sensibility and taste, the magnificence, the graceful union of so many diverse inventions of art, the whole mighty creation of genius that so many centuries since quitted the world without leaving even a name, will come with magical impression on his mind, while it is contemplatively darkening into the awe of

antiquity. But he will be recalled,—the sculptures, the inscriptions, the sanctuaries enclosed off for the special benefit, after death, of persons who had very different concerns during life from that of the care of their salvation, and various other insignia of the original character of the place, will help to recall him,—to the thought, that these proud piles were in fact raised to celebrate the conquest, and prolong the dominion, of the Power of Darkness over the souls of the people. They were as triumphal arches, erected in memorial of the extermination of that truth which was given to be the life of men.

As he looks round, and looks upward, on the prodigy of design, and skill, and perseverance, and tributary wealth, he may image to himself the multitudes that, during successive ages, frequented this fane in the assured belief, that the idle ceremonies and impious superstitions, which they there performed or witnessed, were a service acceptable to heaven, and to be repaid in blessings to the offerers. He may say to himself, Here, on this very floor, under that elevated and decorated vault, in a “dim religious light” like this, but with the darkness of the shadow of death in their souls, they prostrated themselves to their saints, or their “queen of

heaven ;" nay, to painted images and toys of wood or wax, to some ounce or two of bread and wine, to fragments of old bones, and rags of cast-off vestments. Hither they came, when conscience, in looking either back or forward, dismayed them, to purchase remission with money or atoning penances, or to acquire the privilege of sinning in a certain manner, or for a certain time, with impunity ; and they went out at yonder door in the perfect confidence that the priest had secured, in the one case the suspension, in the other the satisfaction, of the divine law. Here they solemnly believed, as they were taught, that, by donatives to the church, they delivered the souls of their departed sinful relatives from their state of punishment ; and they went out at that door resolved to bequeath some portion of their possessions, to operate in the same manner for themselves another day, in the highly probable case of need. Here they were convened to listen in reverence to some representative emissary from the Man of Sin, with new dictates of blasphemy or iniquity promulgated in the name of the Almighty ; or to witness the trickery of some detestable farce, devised to cheat or fright them out of whatever remainder the former impositions might have left them of sense, conscience, or property. Here, in

fine, there was never presented to their understanding, from their childhood to their death, a comprehensive honest declaration of the laws of duty, and the pure doctrines of salvation. To think! that they should have mistaken for the house of God, and the very gate of heaven, a place where the Power of Darkness had so short a way to come from his appropriate dominions, and his agents and purchased slaves so short a way to go thither. If we could imagine a momentary visit from Him who once entered a fabric of sacred denomination with a scourge, because it was made the resort of a common traffic, with what aspect and voice, with what infliction but the "rebuke with flames of fire," would he have entered this mart of iniquity, assuming the name of his sanctuary, where the traffic was in delusions, crimes, and the souls of men? It was even as if, to use the prophet's language, the very "stone cried out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answered it," in denunciation; for, a portion of the means of building, in the case of some of these edifices, was obtained as the price of dispensations and pardons.

In such a hideous light would the earlier history of one of these mighty structures, pretendedly consecrated to christianity, be presented to the reflecting protestant; and then

would recur the idea of its cost, as relative to what that expenditure might really have done for christianity and the people. It absorbed in the construction, sums sufficient to have supplied even manuscript bibles, costly as they were, to all the families of a province; and in the revenues appropriated to its ministration of superstition, enough to have provided men to teach all those families to read those bibles.

In all this, and in the whole constitution of the Grand Apostacy, involving innumerable forms of abuse and abomination to which our object does not require any allusion, how sad a spectacle is held forth of the people destroyed for lack of knowledge. If, as one of their plagues, an inferior one in itself, they were plundered, as we have seen, of their worldly goods, it was, that the spoil might subserve to a still greater wrong. What was lost to the accommodation of the body, was to be made to contribute to the depravation of the spirit. It supplied means for multiplying the powers of the grand ecclesiastical machinery, and confirming the intellectual despotism of the absolute authorities in religion. Those authorities enforced on the people, on pain of final perdition, an acquiescence in principles and ordinances which, in effect, precluded their direct access to the Almighty,

and the Saviour of the world, interposing between them and the Divine Majesty a very extensive, complicated, and heathenish mediation, which in a great measure substituted itself for the real and exclusive mediation of Christ, obscured by its vast creation of intercepting vanities the glory of the Eternal Being, and thus almost extinguished the true worship. But how calamitous was such a condition!—to be thus intercepted from direct intercourse with the Supreme Spirit, and to have the solemn and elevating sentiment of devotion flung downward, on objects and phantoms which even the most superstitious could not pay homage to, without some indistinct sense of degradation.

It was, again, a disastrous thing to be under a directory of practical life framed for the convenience of a corrupt system; a rule which enjoined many things wrong, allowed a dispensation from every thing that was right, and abrogated the essential principle and groundwork of true morality. Still again, it was an unhappy thing, that the consolations in sorrow and the view of death should either be too feeble to animate, or should animate only by deluding. And it was the consummation of evil in the state of the people of those dark ages, it was, emphatically, to be “destroyed,” that the grand doctrines of redemption should

have been essentially vitiated or formally supplanted, so that multitudes of the people were betrayed to rest their final hopes on a ground unauthorized by the Judge of the world. In this most important matter, the spiritual authorities were subjects themselves of the fatal delusion in which they held the community; and well they deserved to be so, in judicial retribution of their wickedness in imposing on the people, deliberately and on system, innumerable things which they knew to be false.

We have often mused, and felt a gloom and dreariness spreading over the mind while we have mused, on descriptions of the aspect of a country after a pestilence has left it in desolation, or of a region where the people are perishing by famine. It has seemed a mournful thing to behold, in contemplation, the multitude of lifeless forms, occupying in silence the same abodes in which they had lived, or scattered upon the gardens, fields, and roads; and then to see the countenances of the beings yet languishing in life, looking despair, and impressed with the signs of approaching death. We have even sometimes had the vivid and horrid picture offered to our imagination, of a number of human creatures shut up by their fellow-mortals in some

strong hold, under an entire privation of sustenance ; and presenting each day their imploring, or infuriated, or grimly sullen, or more calmly woeful countenances, at the iron and impregnable grates ; each succeeding day more haggard, more perfect in the image of despair ; and after a while appearing each day one fewer, till at last all are gone. Now shall we feel it as a *relief* to turn in thought from the inhabitants of a country, or from those of such an accursed prison-house, thus pining away, to behold the different spectacle of numerous national tribes, or any small selection of persons, on whose *minds* are displayed the full effects of knowledge denied ; who are under the process of whatever destruction it is, that spirits can suffer from the want of the vital aliment to the intelligent nature, especially from “ a famine of the words of the Lord ? ”

To bring the two to a close comparison, suppose the case, that some of the persons thus doomed to perish in the tower were in possession of the genuine light and consolations of christianity, perhaps even had actually been adjudged to this fate, (no extravagant supposition,) for zealously and persistingly endeavouring the restoration of the purity of that religion to the deluded community. Let it be supposed that numbers of that

community, having conspired to obtain this adjudgment, frequented the precincts of the fortress to see their victims gradually perishing. It would be perfectly in the spirit of the popish superstition, that they should believe themselves to have done God service, and be accordingly pleased at the sight of the more and more deathlike aspect of the emaciated countenances. The while, they might be themselves in the enjoyment of "fulness of bread." We can imagine them making convivial appointments within sight of the prison grates, and going from the spectacle to meet at the banquet. Or they might delay the festivity, in order to have the additional luxury of knowing that the tragedy was consummated; as Bishop Gardiner would not dine till the martyrs were burnt. — Look at these two contemporary situations, that of the persons with truth and immortal hope in their minds, enduring this slow and painful reduction of their bodies to dissolution, and that of those who, while their bodies fared sumptuously, were thus miserably perishing in soul, through ignorance surrendering it to the curse of a delusion which envenoms it with such a deadly malignity: and say which was the more calamitous predicament.

If we have no hesitation in pronouncing,

let us consider whether we have ever been grateful enough to God for the dashing in pieces so long since, in this land, of a system which maintains, to this hour, much of its stability over the greater part of Christendom. If we regret that certain fragments of it are still held in veneration here, and that so tedious a length of ages should be required, to work out a complete mental rescue from the infatuation which possessed our ancestors, let us at the same time look at the various states of Europe, small and great, where this superstition continues to hold the minds of the people in its odious grasp; and verify to ourselves what we have to be thankful for, by thinking how *our* minds would receive an offered subsistence on their mummeries, masses, absolutions, legends, relics, mediation of saints, and corruptions, even to complete reversal, of the evangelic doctrines.

It was, however, but very slowly that the people of our land realized the benefits of the Reformation, glorious as that event was, regarded as to its progressive and its ultimate consequences. Indeed, the thickness of the preceding darkness was strikingly manifested by the deep shade which still continued stretched over the nation, in spite of the

newly risen luminary, the beams of which lost much of their fire in pervading it to reach the popular mind, and came with the faintness of an obscured and tedious dawn.

Long there lingered enough of night for the evil spirit of popery to be at large and in great power, not abashed and arrested, as Milton represents the Evil Angel, on his being surprised by the heavenly guardians of Paradise. It was rather this invading illuminator itself that was thus encountered and defied, in almost every direction, by the old possessor of the gloomy dominion. The Reformation was not empowered to speak with a voice like that which said, Let there be light—and there was light. Consider what, on its avowed national adoption in our land, were its provisions for acting on the community, and how slow and partial must have been their efficacy, for either the dissipation of ignorance in general, or the riddance of that worst part of it which had thickened round the Romish delusion, as malignant a pestilence as ever walked in darkness. There was an alteration of formularies, a curtailment of rites, a declaration of renouncing, in the name of the church and state, the most palpable of the absurdities, and a change of the persons, in some instances, but in very many others of the professions merely, of the

hierarchy. Such were the appointments and instrumentality for carrying an innovation of opinions and practices through a nation in which the profoundest ignorance and the most inveterate superstition fortified each other. And well may we imagine how fast and how far they would be effective, to convey information and conviction among a people whose reason had been just so much the worse, with respect to religion at least, as it had not been absolutely dormant; and who were too illiterate to be ever the wiser for the volume of inspiration itself, had it been, in their native language, in every house, instead of being scarcely in one house in five hundred.

Doubtless a material advantage was gained through this change of institutions, regarded merely as a loss of the authority which the odious despotism held over men's minds by virtue of being the imperative national establishment. And if, under this relaxation of its grasp, a number of persons declined and escaped into the new faith they hardly knew how or why, it was a very good thing. It was happy to make the transition on *any* terms, with however little of the exercise of reason, with however little of reason to be exercised. It was well to *be* on the right ground, though a man had come thither like one conveyed during his sleep. To have

grown to a state of mind in which he ceased and refused to worship relics and wafers, to rest his confidence on penance and priestly absolution, and to regard the Virgin and saints as in effect the supreme regency of heaven, was a valuable alteration *though* he could not read, and *though* he could not assign, and had not clearly apprehended, the arguments which justified the change. Yes, this would be an important thing gained; but not even thus much *was* gained to the passive slaves of popery but in an exceedingly limited degree, during a long course of time after it was supplanted as a national institution. It continued to maintain in the faith, feelings, and more private habits of the people, a dominion but little enfeebled by the necessity of dissimulation in public observances. As far as to secure this exterior show of submission and conformity, it was an excellent argument that the state had decreed, and would resolutely enforce, a change in religion,—that is to say, till it should be the sovereign pleasure of a succeeding monarch, readily seconded by a majority of the ecclesiastical authorities, just to turn the whole matter round from north to south. But the argument would expend nearly its whole strength upon this policy of saving appearances. For what was there conveyed in it that could

strike inward to act upon the fixed tenets of the mind, to destroy there the effect of the earliest and ten thousand subsequent impressions, of inveterate habit, and of ancient authority? Was it to convince and persuade by virtue of the maxim, that the government in church and state is wiser than the people, and therefore the best judge in every matter? This, as asserted generally, was what the people firmly believed: it has always till lately been an article of the popular faith. But then, was the benefit of this obsequious faith to go exclusively to the government of just that particular time,—a government which, by its innovations and demolitions, was exhibiting a contemptuous dissent from all past government remembered in the land? Were the people not to hesitate a moment to take this innovating government's word for it, that all their forefathers, up through a long series of ages, had been fools and dupes in reverencing, in their time, the wisdom and authority of *their* governors? The most unthinking and submissive would feel that this was too much; especially after they had seen proof that the government demanding so prodigious a concession might, on the substitution of just one individual for another at its head, revoke its own last year's ordinances, and punish those who should contumaciously

continue to be ruled by them. You summon us, they might have said to their governors, at your arbitrary dictate to renounce, as what you are pleased to call idolatries and abominations, the faith and rites held sacred by twenty generations of our ancestors and yours. We are to do this on peril of your highest displeasure, and that of God, whom you so easily assume as your authority or ally; now who will insure us that, within a few months, there may not be a vindictive inquisition made who among us have been the most ready of obedience to offer wicked insult to the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church?

While thus the progress of conviction in the mind of the nation was but slowly and dubiously effected by the authority of the state, the deficiency would be slenderly supplied by that of the class next to the government in the claim to deference, and even holding the precedence in actual influence,—that is, the families of rank and consequence throughout the country. For the people well knew, in their respective neighbourhoods, that many of these had never in reality forsaken the ancient religion, and that some of them hardly attempted or wished to conceal from their inferiors that they preserved their fidelity to its principles and ceremonial. And then the substituted religion, while it came so

inadequately enforced by authority, was also deficient in the pomp which is always the delight of the ignorant; and it acknowledged,—it proclaimed as one of its merits,—a still more fatal defect for attracting converts from among beings whose ignorance had never been suffered to doubt, till then, that men in ecclesiastical garb could modify, or suspend, or defeat for them the justice of God; it proclaimed itself unable to give any exemptions or commutations in matters of conscience.

When such were the recommendations which the new mode of religion had *not*, and when the recommendation which it *had* was simply an offer of evidence to the understanding *that it was true*, no wonder that many of the beings so insensate through ignorance should never become its proselytes. But even as to those who did, while it was a happy deliverance, as we have said, to escape on almost any terms from the utter grossness of popery, still they would carry into their better faith much of the unhappy effect of that previous debasement of their mental existence. How should a man in the rudeness of an intellect left completely ignorant of truth in general, have a luminous apprehension of its most important division? There would not be in men's minds a phenomenon similar to what we image to ourselves of Goshen in the preternatural night

of Egypt, a space of perfect brightness, defined out by a precise limit amidst the general darkness.

Only consider, that the new ideas admitted into the proselyte's understanding as the true faith, were to take their situation there in nearly those very same encompassing circumstances of internal barbarism which had been so perfectly commodious to the superstition recently dwelling there; and that which had been favourable and adapted in the utmost degree, that which had afforded much of the sustenance of life, to the false notions, could not but be most adverse to the development of the true ones. These latter, so environed, would be in a condition too like that of a candle placed in the mephitic air of a vault. The newly adopted religion, therefore, of the wholly uncultivated converts from popery, would be far from exhibiting, as compared with the renounced superstition, a magnitude of change, and force of contrast, duly corresponding to the difference between the lying vanities of priestcraft and a communication from the living God. The reign of ignorance combined with imposture had fixed upon the common people of the age of the Reformation, and of several generations downward, the doom of being incapable of admitting genuine christianity but with an excessively inadequate

apprehension of its attributes ;—as in the patriarchal ages, a man might have received with but the honours appropriate to a saint or prophet the visitant in whom he was entertaining an angel unawares. Happy for both that ancient entertainer of such a visitant, and the ignorant but honest adopter of the reformed religion, when that which they entertained rewarded them according to its own celestial quality, rather than in proportion to their inadequate reception. We may believe that the Divine Being, in special compassion to that ignorance to which barbarism and superstition had condemned inevitably the early converts to the reformed religion, did render that faith beneficial to them beyond the proportion of their narrow and still half superstitious conception of it. And this is, in truth, the consideration the most consolatory in looking on the dreary scene of the period in which popery was slowly retiring, with a protracted exertion of all the craft and strength of an able tyrant contending to the last for prolonged dominion.

This, however, is the alleviating circumstance which is the least apt to occur to our thoughts. It is no such consideration that usually presents itself to extenuate in our view the gloom of that age. Indeed our unreflecting attention allows itself to be so en-

grossed by far different circumstances of that period of our history, as to leave us no perception that the scene *was* gloomy. For what is it but a splendid and animating exhibition that we see in looking back to the age of Elizabeth?

And *was* not that, it may be asked, an age of the highest glory to our nation? What conceivable reason is there why we should repress our delight in contemplating it? How can we refuse to indulge an inspiring sympathy with the energy of those times, an elation of spirit at beholding the unparalleled allotment to her reign of statesmen, heroes, and literary geniuses, but for whom, indeed, “that bright occidental star” would have left no such brilliant track of fame behind her?

Permit us to answer by inquiring, What should the intellectual condition of the *people*, properly so denominated, have been in order to correspond in a due proportion to the magnificence of these their representative chiefs, and complete the grand spectacle as the spectacle of a *nation*? Determine that; and then inquire what actually *was* the state of the people all this while. There is evidence that it was, what the infernal blight and blast of popery might be expected to have left it, generally and most wretchedly degraded.

What it was, is shewn by the facts, that it was found impossible, even under the inspiring auspices of the literate Elizabeth, with her constellation of geniuses, orators, scholars, to supply the churches generally with officiating persons capable of going with decency through the task of the public service, made ready, as every part of it was, to their hands; and that to be able to read, was the very marked distinction of here and there an individual. It requires little effort but that of going low enough, to complete the general account in conformity to these and similar facts.

And here we cannot help remarking what a deception we suffer to pass on us from history. It celebrates some period in a nation's career as pre-eminently illustrious, for magnanimity, lofty enterprize, literature, and original genius. There was perhaps a learned and vigorous monarch, and there were Cecils and Walsinghams, and Shakespeares and Spencers, and Sidneys and Raleighs, with many other powerful thinkers and actors, to render it the proudest age of our national glory. And we unthinkingly admit on our imagination this splendid exhibition as in some manner involving or implying the collective state of the people in that age! The ethereal summits of a tract of the moral world are conspi-

cuous and fair in the lustre of heaven, and we take no thought of the immensely greater proportion of it which is sunk in gloom and covered with fogs. The general mass of the population, whose physical vigour, indeed, and courage, and fidelity to the interests of the country, were of such admirable avail to the purposes, and under the direction, of the mighty spirits that wielded their rough agency,—this great assemblage was sunk in such mental barbarism, as to be placed at about the same distance from their illustrious intellectual chiefs, as the hordes of Scythia from the most elevated minds of Athens. It was nothing to this debased countless multitude spread over the country, existing in the coarsest habits, destitute, in the proportion of ten thousand to one, of cultivation, and still in a great degree enslaved by the popish superstition,—it was nothing to them, in the way of direct influence to draw forth their minds into free exercise and acquirement, that there were, within the circuit of the island, a profound scholarship, a most disciplined and vigorous reason, a masculine eloquence, and genius breathing enchantment. Both the actual possessors of these noble things, and the part of society forming, around them, the sphere immediately pervaded by the delight and instruction imparted by them, might as well, for any thing they diffused of this luxury and benefit among

the general multitude, have been a Brahminical cast, dissociated by an imagined essential distinction of nature. While they were exulting in this elevation and free excursiveness of mental existence, the prostrate crowd were grovelling through life, as through obscure narrow passages to their graves. But this crowd it was that constituted the substance of the *nation*; to which *nation* in the mass the historian applies the superb epithets, which a small proportion of the men of that age claimed by a striking *exception* to the general state of the community. History too much consults our love of effect and pomp, to let us see in a close and distinct manner any thing

“ On the low level of th’ inglorious throng ;”

and our attention is borne away to the intellectual splendour exhibited among the most favoured aspirants of the seats of learning, or in councils, courts, and camps, in heroic and romantic enterprizes, and in some immortal works of genius. And thus we are as if gazing with delight at a prodigious public bonfire, while, in all the cottages round, the people are shivering for want of fuel.

Our history becomes very bright again with the intellectual and literary riches of a much

later period, often denominated a golden age,—that which was illustrated by the talents of Addison, Pope, Swift, and their numerous secondaries in fame; and which was amply furnished, too, with its philosophers, statesmen, and heroes. And in the lapse of four or five ages, according to the average term of human life, since the earlier grand display of mind, what had been effected toward such an advancement of intelligence in the community, that when this next tribe of highly endowed spirits should appear, they would stand in much less opprobrious contrast to the main body of the nation, and find a much larger portion of it qualified to receive their intellectual effusions? By this time, the class of persons who sought knowledge on a wider scale than what sufficed for the ordinary affairs of life, who took an interest in literature, and constituted the *Authors' Public*, had indeed extended a little, a very little, beyond the people of condition, the persons educated in learned institutions, and those whose professions involved some necessity, and might create some taste, for reading. But still they *were* a *class*, and that with a limitation marked and palpable, to a degree very difficult for us now to conceive. They were in contact, on the one side, with the great thinkers, moralists, poets, and wits,

but very slightly in communication with the generality of the people on the other. They received the emanations of the powerful assemblage of talent and knowledge, but did not serve as conductors to convey them down indefinitely into the community. The national body, regarded in its intellectual character, had an inspirited and vigorous superior part, as constituted of these men of eminent talents and attainments, and this small class of persons in a measure assimilated to them in thinking and taste; but it was in a condition resembling that of a human frame in which (through an injury in the spinal marrow,) some of the most important functions of vitality have terminated at some precise limit downward, leaving the inferior extremities devoid of sensation and the power of action.

It is on record, that works admirably adapted to find readers, and to make them, had but an extremely confined and slowly widening circulation, according to *our* standard of the popular success of the productions of distinguished genius. Nor did the writers *reckon* on any such popular success. In the calculations of their literary ambition, it was a thing of course that the people went for nothing. It is apparent in allusions to the people occurring in these very works, that “the lower sort,” “the vulgar herd,” “the

canaille," "the mob," "the many-headed beast," "the million," (and even these designations generally meant something short of the lowest classes of all,) were no more thought of in any relation to a state of cultivated intelligence than Turks or Tartars. The readers are habitually recognized as a kind of select community, conversed with on topics and in a language with which the vulgar have nothing to do,—a converse the more gratifying on that account. And any casual allusions to the bulk of the people are expressed in phrases unaffectedly implying, that they are a herd of beings existing on quite other terms, and for essentially other ends, than we, fine writers, and you, our admiring readers. It is evident in our literature of that age, (a feature still more prominent in that of France, at the same and down to a much later period,) that the main national population were held by the mental lords in the most genuine sovereign contempt, as creatures to which souls were given just to render their limbs mechanically serviceable.

Wickedly wrong as such a feeling was, there is no doubt that the actual state of the people was perfectly adapted to excite it, in men whose large and richly cultivated minds did not contain philanthropy or christian charity enough to regret the popular debasement

as a calamity. For while they were indulging their pride in the elevation, and their taste in all the luxuries and varieties, of that ampler higher range of existence enjoyed by such men, and could even infuse a refinement and a grace into the very turpitude of the elegant part of society, the great living crowd of the nation would appear to them as—a good stout race of animals, indeed, and well fitted for their appointed use, supposing it an use which left mind out of the account, but as—a contemptible and offensive mass of barbarism, if to be viewed in any reference to what man is in his higher style. While they of this higher style were revelling in an unlimited opulence of ideas, the majority of the inhabitants of the island were reduced to subsist on the most beggarly pittance on which mind could be barely kept alive. Probably they had still fewer ideas than the people of the former age which we have been describing. For many of those with which popery had occupied the faith and fancy of that earlier generation, had now vanished from the popular mind, without being replaced in equal number by better ideas, or by ideas of any kind. And then their vices had the whole grossness of vice, and their favourite amusements were at best rude and boisterous, and a large proportion of them detestably savage and cruel.

So that when we look at the shining wits, poets, and philosophers, of that age, they appear like gaudy flowers growing in a putrid marsh.

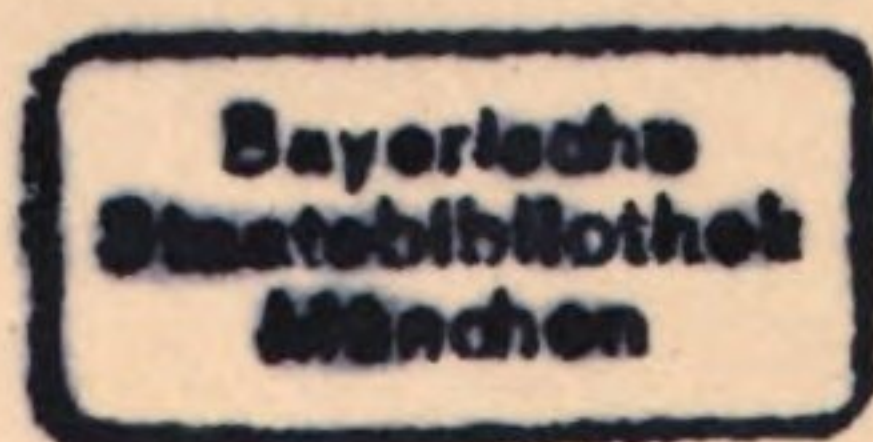
And to a much later period this deplorable ignorance, with all its appropriate consequences, continued to be the dishonour and the plague of the intellectual and moral condition of the inhabitants of England. Of England! which had through many centuries made so great a figure in christendom; which has been so splendid in arms, liberty, legislation, science, and all manner of literature; which has boasted its universities, of ancient foundation and proudest fame, munificently endowed, and possessing, in their accumulations of literary treasure, nearly the whole results of all the strongest thinking there had been in the world; and which has had also, through the charity of individuals, such a number of minor institutions for education, that the persons entrusted to see them administered have in very numerous instances not scrupled to divert their resources to totally different purposes, of course as judging that really too much popular instruction would be created by their faithful application to the appointed one. Of England! so long after the Reformation, and all the while under the superintendence and tuition of an ecclesiastical

establishment for both instruction and jurisdiction, co-extended with the entire nation, and furnished for its ministry with men from the discipline of institutions where every thing the most important to be known was professed to be taught. Thus favoured had England been, thus was she favoured at the period under our review, (the former part of the last century,) with the facilities, the provisions, the great intellectual apparatus, to be wielded in any mode her wisdom might devise, and with whatever strength of hand she chose to apply, for promoting her several millions of rational, accountable, immortal beings, somewhat beyond a state of mere physical existence. When therefore, notwithstanding all this, an awful proportion of them were under the continual process of destruction for want of knowledge, what a tremendous responsibility was borne, whether consciously or insensibly, by whatever part of the community it was that stood, either by formal vocation, or by the general obligation inseparable from ability, in the relation of guardianship to the rest.

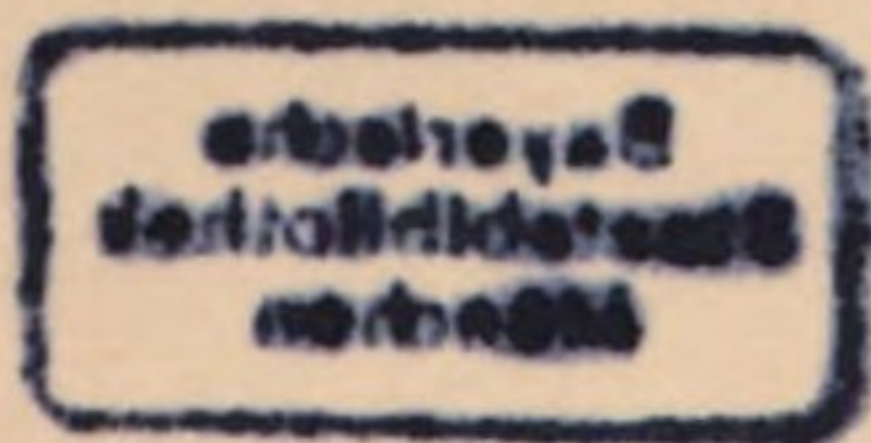
But here the voice of that kind of patriotism which is accounted among the first of virtues both in England and China, may be expected to interpose, and say, There is a malicious or

wanton spirit of exaggeration and invective in all this. It is not to be believed that there could be such grievous calamity to the people, or such wicked misconduct on the part of their guardians, as this inflated declamation would represent, in any state of things which the combined power, wealth, intelligence, and religion of England so long tranquilly suffered to continue. England has been a nation breathing another spirit than to tolerate long any gross moral deformity which her utmost energy could remove or modify.

Alas ! this would be a thoughtless and rash encomium, even though there were not the opprobrious fact in question standing in direct contradiction to it. There is no saying *what* a civilized and christian nation, (so called,) may not tolerate. Recollect the Slave Trade, which, with the magnitude of a national concern, continued its infernal course of abominations while one generation after another of Englishmen passed away ; and the united illumination, conscience, and power of the country, maintained as faithful a peace with it as if the Divine anger had been apprehended against whatever should threaten its molestation. This is but one of many mortifying illustrations how much the constitution of our moral sentiments resembles a Manichæan creation, how much of them is formed in pas-



sive submission to the evil principle, acting through prevailing custom; which determines that it shall but very partially depend on the real and most manifest qualities of things presented to us, whether we shall have any right perception of the characters of good and evil. The agency which works this mal-formation in our sentiments needs no greater triumph, than that the true nature of things should be disguised to us by the very effect of their being constantly kept in our sight. Could any malignant enchanter wish for more than this,—to make us insensible to the odious quality of things not only *though* these things stand constantly and directly in our view, but *because* they do so? And while they do so, there may also be placed as if close by them the truths which *shew* their real nature, and might, it would have been supposed, have prevented all deception; and these truths shall be no other than some of the plainest principles of reason and religion. It shall be as if men of wicked designs could be compelled to wear labels on their breasts wherever they go, to announce their character in conspicuous letters; or nightly assassins could be forced to carry torches before them, to reveal the murderer in their visages; or as if, according to a vulgar superstition, evil spirits could not help betraying their presence



by a tinge of brimstone in the flame of the lamps. Thus evident, by the light of reason and religion, shall have been the true nature of certain important facts in the system of a christian nation; and nevertheless, even the cultivated part of that nation, during a series of generations, shall have directly before their sight an enormous nuisance and iniquity, yet never be struck with its quality, never be made restless by its annoyance, never seriously think of it. And so its odiousness shall never be decidedly apprehended till some individual or two, as by the acquisition of a new moral sense, receive a sudden intuition of its nature, a disclosure of its most interior essence and malignity,—the essence and malignity of that very thing which has been offering its quality to view, without the least reserve, by the most flagrant signs, to millions of observers.

Thus it has been with respect to the barbarous ignorance under which nine tenths of the population of our country have continued, through a number of ages subsequent to the Reformation, surrendered to every thing low, vicious, and wretched. This state of national debasement and dishonour was manifest in its whole breadth to statesmen, to dignified and subordinate ecclesiastics, to magistrates, to the philosophic observers of man as he is, and

to all those whose rank and opulence brought them hourly proofs what influence they could exert on the people below them. And still it appeared all very right, or at least substantially so, that the multitudes, constituting the grand living agency through the realm, should remain in such a condition that, when they died, the country should lose nothing but so much animated body, and the quantum of vice which had probably helped to keep it in action. When at length a different estimate was beginning to find its way into society, these classes were exceedingly slow in their assent to the reformed doctrine which pronounced all this to be wrong. A large proportion of them even declared, on system, against the speculations and plans which philanthropy was growing earnest to bring to some practical bearing on the object of giving the people, at last, the use and value of their souls as well as their hands. The philanthropists ought, perhaps, to have known better than to be surprised at the phenomenon. But they might be pardoned the simplicity of not foreseeing such an opposition. They were to be made wiser by force, with respect to men's governing prejudices and motives. So ungracious a manner, however, of having the insight into motives sharpened, does not tend to make its subsequent exercise indulgent. It will

have much of the glance of suspicion, when it is turned to the inspection of altered appearances assumed by persons and classes who have previously been in decided opposition. What arguments have prevailed with you, (the question might be,) since you have never frankly retracted your former contempt of those which convinced *us*? May any sinister thought have occurred, that you might defeat our ends by a certain way of managing the means? Or do you hope to determine and limit to some subordinate purposes, what we wish to prosecute for the most general good? Or would you rather impose on yourselves the grievance of promoting an object which you dislike, than that we should have the chief credit of promoting it? Do you sometimes accompany your working in the vineyard with maledictions on those who have reduced you to such a necessity? Would you have been glad to be saved the unwelcome service by *their* letting it alone?

It cannot be disowned by those friends of man and their country who were the earliest to combine in schemes for enlightening the people, and who continue to prosecute the object on the most liberal and comprehensive principle, that surmises like these would sometimes be suggested to their minds. Nevertheless, they are willing to forego any shrewd investi-

gation into the causes of the later silence and apparent acquiescence of some of the former opposers; and into the motives instigating others of them to the adoption, though in a frowning and repellent mood, of measures tending in their general effect to the same end. Were they even compelled to entertain an unfavourable judgment or suspicion of those motives, they would be reminded of an example, not altogether foreign to the nature of their business, and quite in point to their duty,—that of the magnanimous principle through which the great Apostle disappointed his adversaries, by placing himself in sympathy with the policy and the triumph of his cause, while he saw it availing itself of these foes after the manner of some consummate general, who has had the art to make those who have come into the field as but treacherous auxiliaries co-operate effectually in the battle which they never intended he should gain. Some preached Christ of envy, and strife, and contention, supposing to add affliction to his bonds; but, says he, What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or truth, Christ is preached—*the thing itself is done*—and I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. When animated by this high principle, this ambition absolutely *for the cause itself*, its servant is a gainer, because *it is a*

gainer, by all things convertible into tribute, whatever may be the temper or intention of the offerers, either as towards the cause or towards himself. He may say to them, I am more pleased by what you are actually doing in advancement of the object to which I am devoted, than it is possible for you to aggrrieve me by letting me see that you would not be sorry for the frustration of *my* schemes and exertions for its service; or even by betraying, though I should regret such a state of your minds, that you would be content to sacrifice *it* for the purpose of defeating *me*.

We revert but for one moment to the review of past times.—We said that long after the brilliant show of talent, and the creation of literary supplies for the national use, in the early part of the last century, the deplorable mental condition of the people remained in no very great degree altered. To pass from beholding that bright and sumptuous display, in order to see what there was corresponding to it in the subsequent state of the popular cultivation, is like going out from some magnificent apartment, with its lustres, music, refectations, and assemblage of elegant personages, to be beset by beggars in the gloom and cold of a winter night.

Take a few hours' indulgence in the literary

luxuries of Addison and Pope, and then turn to some authentic plain representation of the attainments and habits of the mass of the people, at the time when Whitefield and Wesley commenced their invasion of the barbarous community. But the benevolent reader, (or let him be a patriotically proud one,) is quite reluctant to recognise his country, his celebrated christian nation, the most enlightened in the world, in a populace for the far greater part as perfectly estranged from the page of knowledge as if printing, or even letters, had never been invented ; the younger part finding their supreme delight in rough frolic and savage sports, the old sinking down into impenetrable stupefaction with the decline of the vital principle.

If he would eagerly seek to fix on something as a counterbalance to this, and endeavour to modify the estimate and relieve the feeling, by citing perhaps the courage, and a certain rudimental capacity of good sense, in which the people are acknowledged to have surpassed the neighbouring nations, he will be compelled to see how these native endowments were overrun and befooled by a multitude of the most contemptible superstitions ;—contemptible not only for their stupid absurdity, but also as having in general nothing of that pensive, lofty, and poetical character which

superstition itself is capable of assuming.—It is an exception to be made with respect to the northernmost part of the island, that superstition did there partake of this higher character.

As to religion, there is no hazard in saying, that several millions of them had no further notion of it than that it was an occasional, or in the opinion of perhaps one in twenty, a regular attendance at church, hardly taking into the account that they were to be taught any thing there. And what *were* they taught? The state of their notions would be, so to speak, brought out, it would be made apparent what they were taught or not taught, when so strong and general a sensation was produced by the irruption among them of the two reformers just named, proclaiming, as they both did, notwithstanding very considerable differences of secondary order, the principles which had been solemnly declared to be of the essence of christianity in that model of doctrine which had been appointed to prescribe and conserve the national faith. If such doctrine *had* been imparted to the popular mind, even though with somewhat less positive statement, less copiousness of illustration, and less cogency of enforcement, than might have been justly required;—if it had been but in *substance* fixed in the people's un-

derstanding, by the ministry of the immensely numerous order of authorized instructors, who were by their institute most solemnly enjoined and pledged not to teach a different one, and not to fail of teaching this ;—if, we repeat, this faith, so conspicuously declared in the articles, homilies, and liturgy, had been in any degree in possession of the people's minds, they would have recognized its main principles, or at least a strong similarity of principles, in the addresses of these two new preachers. They would have done so, notwithstanding a peculiarity of phraseology, which it is not to be denied that Whitefield and Wesley carried to excess ; and notwithstanding certain specialities which the latter did not, even supposing them to be truths, keep sufficiently down in exhibiting the prominent essentials of christianity, in the earlier stages of his public labours. The preaching, therefore, of these men was a test of what the people had been previously taught or allowed to repose in as christian truth, under the tuition of their great religious guardian, the national church. What it was or was not would be found, in their having a sense of something like what they had been taught before, or something opposite to it, or something altogether foreign and unknown, while they were hearing these loud proclaimers of

the old doctrines of the Reformation. Now then, as carrying with them this quality of a test, how were those men received in the community? Why, they were generally received, on account of the import of what they said, still more than from their zealous manner of saying it, with as strong an impression of novelty, strangeness, and contrariety to every thing hitherto heard of, as any of our voyagers and travellers of discovery have been by the barbarous tribes who had never before seen civilized man, or as the Spaniards on their arrival in Mexico or Peru. They might, as the voyagers have done, experience every local difference of moral temperament, from that which hailed them with acclamations, to that which went off in a volley of mud and stones; but through all these varieties of greetings, there was a strong sense of something then brought before them for the first time. “Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears,” was an expression not more unaffectedly uttered by any hearer of an apostle, preaching in a heathen city. And to many of the auditors, it was a matter of nearly as much difficulty as it would to an inquisitive heathen, and required as new a posture of the mind, to obtain a clear view of the evangelical doctrines, though they were the very same

which had been held forth by the fathers and martyrs of the English Church.

We have alluded to the violence, which sometimes encountered the endeavour to restore these doctrines to the knowledge and faith of the people. And if any one should have thought that, in the descriptions we have been giving, too frequent and willing use has been made of the epithet “barbarous,” and similar words, as if we could have a perverse pleasure in degrading our nation, we would request him to select for himself the appropriate terms for characterizing that state of the people, in point of sense and civilization, to say nothing of religion, which could admit such a fact as this, for their history to record,—namely, that, in a vast number of instances and places, where some person unexceptionable in character as far as known, and sometimes well known as a worthy man, has attempted to address a number of the inhabitants, under a roof or under the sky, on what it imported them beyond all things in the world to know and consider, a multitude have rushed together shouting and howling, raving and cursing, and accompanying, in many of the instances, their furious cries and yells with loathsome or dangerous missiles; dragging or driving the

preacher from his humble stand, forcing him, and the few that wished to encourage and hear him, to flee for their lives, sometimes not without serious injury before they could escape. That such a history of the people may shew how deservedly their superiors were denominated their "betters," it has to add, that these savage tumults were generally instigated or abetted, sometimes under a little concealment, but often avowedly, by persons of higher condition, and even by those consecrated to the office of religious instruction; and this advantage of their station was lent to defend the perpetrators against shame, or remorse, or judicial visitation, for the outrage.

There would be no hazard, we believe, in affirming, that since Wesley and Whitefield began the conflict with the heathenism of the country, there have been in it hundreds of occurrences answering in substance to this description. From any one, therefore, who should be inclined to accuse us of harsh language, we may well repeat the demand in what terms *he* would think he gave the true character of a mental and moral condition, manifested in such explosions of obstreperous savage violence as the christian missionaries among eastern idolaters never have the slightest cause to apprehend. These outrages were so far from uncommon, or confined to any

one part of the country, a little before and for a very long while after the middle of the last century, that they might be fairly taken as an exemplification of a spirit in established possession of a large part of the nation. Yet the good and zealous men whose lot it was to be thus set upon by a depraved infuriate rabble of many hundreds, the foremost of them active in direct violence, and the rest venting their ferocious delight in a hideous blending of ribaldry and execration, of joking and cursing, were taxed with a canting hypocrisy, or a fanatical madness, for speaking of the prevailing ignorance and barbarism in terms equivalent to our sentence from the Prophet, "The people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," and for deploring the hopelessness of any revolution in this empire of darkness by means of the existing institutions, which seemed indeed to have become themselves its strong holds.

But those whom direct danger could not deter from renewing and indefinitely repeating such attempts at all hazards, were little likely to be appalled by these contumelies of speech. To the persons so abusing them they might coolly reply, "Now really you are inconsiderately wasting your labour. Don't you know, that on the account of this same business we have sustained the battery of

stones, brickbats, and the contents of the ditch? And can you believe we can much care for mere *words* of insult, after that? Albeit the opprobrious phrases *have* the coarse violence bursting from the pride of property without education, or the more highly inspired tone of invective learnt in a college, they are quite another kind of thing to be the mark for, than such assailments as have come from the brawny arms of some of your peasants, set on probably by broad hints or plain expressions how much you would be pleased with such exploits."——It is gratifying to see thus exemplified, in the endurance of evil for a good cause, the effect of that provision in our nature for economizing the expense of feeling, through which the encountering of the greater creates a hardihood which can despise the less.

That our descriptive observations do not exaggerate the popular ignorance, with its natural concomitants, as prevailing at the middle of the last century, and far downward from that time, many of the elderly persons among us can readily confirm, from what they remember of the testimony of their immediate ancestors, some of them perhaps not very long removed from the world. It will easily be recollected what pictures they gave, of the

moral scene spread over the country when they were young. They could convey lively images of the situations in which the vulgar notions and manners had their free display, by representing the assemblages, and the cast of communication, at fairs, revels, and other rendezvous of amusement, or in the field of rural employment, or on the village green, or in front of the mechanic's shop. They could recount various anecdotes characteristic of the times; and repeat short dialogues, or single sayings, which expressed the very essence of what was to the population of the township or province instead of law and prophets, or sages or apostles. They could describe how free from all sense of shame whole families would seem to be, from grandsires down to the third rude reckless generation, for not being able to read; and how well content, when there was some one individual in the neighbourhood who could read an advertisement, or ballad, or last dying speech of a malefactor, for the benefit of the rest. They could describe the desolation of the land, with respect to any enlightening and impressive religious instruction in the places of worship; in the generality of which, indeed, the whole spirit and manner of the service tended to what we just now described as the fact,—that religion, in its proper sense, was absolutely a

thing not recognised at all. To most of the persons there the forms attended to were *representative* of literally nothing—they were *themselves* the all.* And as to those who really did in the course of their attendance acquire something assignable as their creed, our supposed reporters could tell what wretched and delusive notions of religion they were permitted and authorized, by their

* None of the traditional anecdotes of those times are more illustrative than those which shew how totally religion, regarded as a thing which the observances at the church were to *teach* and *inspire*, not to *constitute*, was out of the question with both people and priest. Many such anecdotes must have been heard by every one who has conversed much with such aged persons as remember the most of former times. Some traditions of this kind may be recalled to mind, through similarity of character, by hearing such an instance as the following. A friend of the writer mentions, that he heard his father, whose veracity he regards as entirely above all question, relate as one of the recollections of the time when he was a young man, that in the parish church where he attended, the service was one Sunday morning performed with a somewhat unusual despatch, and with every abbreviation that depended on the discretion of the minister; who at the conclusion explained the circumstance publicly by saying, that as neighbour such-a-one (mentioning the name) was going to bait his bull in the afternoon, he had been as short as possible that the congregation might have good time for the sport.—The relater of this to the writer thinks it may, indeed, have been as long since as seventy, or perhaps eighty years.

appointed spiritual guides, to carry with them to their last hour. At which hour, some ceremonial form was to be a passport to heaven: a little bread and wine, converted into a mysterious object of superstition, by receiving an ecclesiastical name of unknown import, accompanied with some sentences regarded much in the nature of an incantation,—and all was safe! The sinner expiring believed so, and the sinners surviving were allowed to form their plan of life on a calculation of the same final resource.

Thus the past age has left an image of its character in the minds of the generation now themselves growing old, impressed there by immediate tradition from persons who lived in it. Here and there, indeed, there still lingers, so long after the departure of the great company to which he belonged, an ancient who retains in some degree this image immediately from the reality, as having become of an age to look at the world, and take a share in its activities, about the middle of the last century. And it might be an employment of considerable though rather melancholy interest, for a person visiting many parts of the land, to put in requisition, in each place, for a day or two, the most faithful of the memories of the most narrative of the oldest peo-

ple, for materials toward forming an estimate of the mental and moral state of the main body of the inhabitants, of town or country, in the period of which they themselves saw the latter part, and remember it in combination with what their progenitors testified of the former. With the removal of these persons the image of that age, in its most vivid delineation on the mind, will become extinct. It will soon, therefore, be no otherwise to be acquired than from written memorials.

But supposing the scene could be brought back to the mental eye, in full verity and distinctness, as in a vision supernaturally imparted, are we sure we should not have the mortification of perceiving that the change, from the condition of the people then to their condition now, has been in but poor proportion to the amount of the advantages, which we are apt to be elated in recounting as the boast and happiness of a later age? To assume that we should *not*, is to impute to that former age still more ignorance and debasement than appear in the above description. For what could, what must that condition have been, if it was worse than the present by any thing near the difference of a tolerably fair improvement of the additional means latterly afforded? An estimate being made of the measure of intelligence and worth found

among the descendants, let so much be taken out as we are willing to attribute to the effect of these additional means, and what will that remainder be which is to represent the state of the ancestors, formed under a system of means wanting all those which we are allowing ourselves to think important enough to warrant the frequent expression, "This new era?"

The means wanting to the former generation, and that have sprung into existence for the latter, may be briefly noted; and those of a religious nature may be named first. It is the most obvious of public expedients, that good men who wish to make others so, should *preach* to them. And there has been a wonderful extension of this practice since the appearance of Whitefield and Wesley. The spirit actuating the associated followers of the latter, has impelled forth their whole disposable force (to use a military phrase) to this service; and they have sent preachers into many parts of the land where preaching itself, in any fair sense of the term, was wholly a novelty; and where there was roused as earnest a zeal to crush this alarming innovation, as ever the people of Iceland displayed on the occasion of the approach of a bear to invade their folds. To a confederacy of christians so

well aware of their own strength and progress, it may seem a superfluous testimony that they are doing incalculable good among our population, more good probably than any other religious connexion. This tribute is paid not the less freely for a material difference in theological opinion; nor for our thinking, that they may have displayed some certain modicum too much of ambition in capacity of a religious body, combined with a good deal too much tendency to servility to power in capacity of citizens; as also a small portion more than is *defensively* necessary of the Ishmaelitish quality as toward other sects of dissenters, and some exemplification of the difficulty of combining sound judgment with ardent feelings.

An immense augmentation has been brought to the sum of public instruction, by the continually enlarging numbers of dissenters of other denominations. Whatever may be the speculation on some of the consequences of the great extension of dissent, it will hardly be considered as a circumstance tending to prolong the reign of *ignorance* that thus, within the last fifty years, there have been put in activity to impart religious ideas to the people not fewer perhaps (exclusively of the Wesleyans) than a thousand minds that would, under a continuance of the former state of

things, have been doing no such service ; that is to say, the service would not have been done at all. Let it be considered, too, that the doctrines inculcated as of the first importance, in the preaching of far the greatest number of them, were exactly those which the Established Church avowed in her formularies and disowned in her ministry,—the very circumstance that, more than any other cause, *made* the people dissenters.—It is to be added, that so much public activity in religious instruction could not be altogether unaccompanied by an increase of exertion in the more private methods of imparting it.

It is another important accession to the enlarged system of operations against religious ignorance, that a proportion of the Established Church itself has been recovered to the spirit of its venerable founders, by the progressive formation in it of a zealous evangelical ministry ; dissenters within their own community, if we may believe the constant loud declarations of the bulk of that community, and especially of the most dignified, learned, and powerful classes in it. But nevertheless these excellent and most useful men have a material advantage, for influence on many of the people, in being invested with the credentials of the ancient institution, from which the popular mind has been slow and

reluctant in withdrawing its veneration ; and for which that sentiment, if not quite extinct, is ready to revive at any appearance in it of a worthier spirit arising. We say, if the sentiment is not quite extinct ; for we are aware what a very large proportion of the people are gone beyond the possibility of feeling it any more. But still the number is great of those who experience, at this new appearance, a reanimation of their affection for the church ; and so fondly identify the partial change with the whole institution, that they feel as if a parent, who had for a long while neglected or deserted them, but for whom they could never cease to cherish a filial regard, were restored to them, with a renewal of the benignant qualities and cares of the parental character.

Thus far the statement of the means which England was not to furnish for its people till the latter part of the eighteenth century, relates to their better instruction in religion. It will not be objected that this is beside the purpose of an enumeration of expedients for lessening their *ignorance*, by any one who can allow that religion, regarded as a subject of the understanding, is the most important part of knowledge, and who has observed the fact that religion, when it begins to *interest*

uncultivated minds, evinces a surprising power to invigorate the intellectual faculties; an effect exactly the reverse of that of superstition, and produced by the contrary operation; for while superstition represses and even curses any free action of the intellect, true religion both requires and excites it. Though the great christian truths, when embraced with conviction and seriousness by a very uneducated man, must greatly share with him, it is too true, the ill fortune which has confined his mental growth, they will often do more than any other thing within the same space of time to avenge him of it.

But besides the great extension of instruction in a form specifically religious, there have been various causes and means contributing to the increase of knowledge among the people. After it had been seen for centuries in what manner the children of the poor were suffered to spend the Sunday, it struck one observer at last, that they might on that day be taught to read!—a possibility which had never been suspected; a disclosure as of some hitherto hidden power of nature. The schools which taught the children to read, brought to parents so much proof of this being a good thing, that many other schools of a humble order arose to continue that instruction through the week. It was within what may be ac-

counted as the same period that there was a large circulation of tracts, which made entertainment happily subservient to moral and pious instruction, and the best of which will remain a monument of the talent, knowledge, and benevolence, of that distinguished benefactor of her country and age, Mrs. H. More, perhaps even pre-eminent above her many excellent works in a higher strain. Later issues of tracts, of every diversity of composition, and diffused by the activity of numberless hands, have solicited perhaps almost half the thoughtless beings in the nation to make at least one short effort to think.

The enormous flight of periodical miscellanies, and of newspapers, must be taken as both the indication and the cause that hundreds of thousands of persons were giving some attention to the matters of general information, where their grandfathers had been, during the intervals of time allowed by their employments, prating, brawling, sleeping, or drinking their hours away.

It is perhaps an item of some small value in the account, that a new class of ideas was furnished by the many wonderful effects of science, in the application of the elements and mechanical powers. The people saw human intelligence so effectually inspiring inanimate matter, as to create a new and

mighty order of agency, appearing in a certain degree independent of man himself, and in its power immensely surpassing any simple immediate exertion of *his* power. They saw wood and iron, fire, water, and air, actuated to the production of effects which might vie with what their rude ancestors had been accustomed to believe of giants, magicians, alchemists, and monsters; effects which the few more intelligent of the former race, (excepting here and there a mind of the very highest reach,) would have scorned any dream that should have presumed to predict.

It is true, that very ignorant persons can wonder at such things without deriving much instruction from them; and that much sooner than the more cultivated ones they become so familiarized with them as not to think of them. All *effects*, however astonishing, are apt, if they be but regular in their recurrence, to become very soon insignificant to those who have never learnt to think of *causes*. But still, it would be some little advantage to the people's understanding to see what prodigious effects could be produced without any preternatural interference. Though not comprehending the science employed, they could comprehend that what they saw *was* purely a matter of science, and that the cause and the effect were natural and definite; unlike the

present race of Egyptians, who regard the very mechanics of an European as an operation of magic ; and are capable of expecting that a machine constructed by a man from England, for raising water from the Nile, should inundate the country in an hour. These wonders of science and art must therefore have contributed somewhat to rid our people of the impressions of being at every turn beset by witchcraft, and to expel the notions of a vague and capricious agency interfering and sporting with events throughout the system around them. Their rationality thus obtained an improvement which may be set against the injury undoubtedly done them through that diminished exercise of the understanding which accompanied the progressive division of labour ; an alteration rendered inevitable, and in other respects so advantageous.

When we come down to a comparatively recent time, we see the Bible “ going up on the breadth of the land.” In passing by any given number of houses of the inferior class, we may presume there are in them twice as many copies of that sacred book as there were in the same number but twenty years since. And when we consider how many more persons in those houses can read, and

that in some of them the book may be *more* read for having come there as a novelty, than it is in many others where it has been an old article of the furniture, we may fairly presume that the increased reading is in a greater proportion than the increased number of bibles.— This very late period has also brought into action a new engine of immense power, a parallel and rival to that which is confessedly the greatest of modern acquisitions to mechanical operation. An organization for schools has been invented, by which, instead of one or two overlaboured agents upon a mass of reluctant subjects, that whole mass itself shall be animated into a system of reciprocal agency. Its adoption, we trust, will be as extensive as is deserved by a contrivance which associates with mental labour a pleasure never known to young learners before.

One more distinction of our times has been, that effect which missionary and other philanthropic societies have had, to render familiar to common knowledge, by means of their meetings and publications, a great number of such interesting and important facts, in the state of other countries and our own, as would formerly have been far beyond the sphere of ordinary information. We may add the obvious and important circumstance, that for a good many years past, there has been a most

copious inventiveness in making almost every sort of information offer itself in brief, familiar, and attractive forms, adapted to youth or to adult ignorance; so that knowledge, which was formerly a thing to be searched and dug for "as for hid treasures," has seemed at last beginning to effloresce through the surface of the ground on all sides of us.

The statement of what recent times have produced for effecting an alteration among the people, would be essentially deficient if it omitted the prodigious commotion in the political world during the last thirty years. It were absurd, it is true, to name this in the simple character of a *cause*, when speaking of the rising of the popular mind from a long stagnation, since it was itself a proof and result of a great preceding disturbance of that stagnation. But still, the pre-dispositions and pre-disposing circumstances from which it sprung were as nothing in comparison with what it has effected in its progress. In the whole compass of time there has been no train of events, that has within so short a period stirred to the very bottom the mind of so vast a portion of the race. And the power of this great commotion has consisted not so much in the magnitude of its phenomena, as in its being an intense activity of *principles*. It was as different from other convulsions in the moral

world, as a tempest which should be attributed to the direct intervention of a mighty spirit, whether believed celestial or infernal, would be from one raised in the elements by mere natural causes. The people were not, as in other instances of battles, revolutions, and striking alternations of fortune, gazing at a mere show of wonderful events, but regarded these events as the course of a grand practical debate of questions affecting their own interests.

And now, when we have put all these things together, we may well pause to indulge again our wonder what *could* have been the mental situation of a majority of the inhabitants of this country, antecedently to this creation and conjunction of so many means and influences for awaking them to something of an intelligent existence.

SECTION III.

Great ignorance and debasement still manifest in various features of the popular character.—Entire want, in early life, of any idea of a general and comprehensive purpose to be pursued.—Gratification of the senses the chief good.—Cruelty a subsidiary resource.—Disposition to cruelty displayed and confirmed by common practices.—Confirmed especially by the manner of slaughtering animals destined for food.—Displayed in the abuse of the labouring animals.—General characteristic of the people an indistinct and faint sense of right and wrong.—Various exemplifications.—Dis-honour to our country that the people should have remained in such a condition.—Effects of their ignorance as appearing in several parts of the economy of life; in their ordinary occupations; in their manner of spending their leisure time, including the Sunday; in the state of domestic society; consequences of this last as seen in the old age of parents.—The lower classes placed by their want of education out of amicable communication with the higher.—Unhappy and dangerous consequences of this.—Great decline of the respect which

in former times the people felt toward the higher classes and the existing order of the community.—Progress of a contrary spirit.

THE review of the past may here be terminated. And how welcome a change it would be if we might here completely emerge from the gloom which has overspread it. How happy were it if, in proceeding to an estimate of the people of the present times, we found so rich a practical result of the means for forming a more enlightened race, that we should have no further recollection of that sentence from the Prophet, which has hitherto suggested itself again at every step in prosecution of the survey. But we are compelled to see how slow is the progress of mankind toward thus rendering obsolete or but purely historical any of the darker lines of the sacred book. So completely, so desperately, had the whole popular body and being been pervaded by the stupifying power of the long reign of ignorance,—with such heavy reluctance, at the best, does the human mind open its eyes to admit light,—and so incommensurate as yet, even on the supposition of its having much less of this reluctance, has been in quantity the whole new supply of means for a happy change,—that we have still before us a melancholy spectacle.

Even that portion of beneficial effect which actually has resulted from this co-operation of new forces, has served to make a more obvious exposure of the unhappiness and offensiveness of what is still the condition of the far greater part of our population; as a dreary waste is made to give a more sensible impression how dreary it is, by the little inroads of cultivation and beauty in its hollows, and the faint advances of an unwonted green upon its borders. The degradation of the lower class is the most forcibly illustrated, as seen in contrast with something better within that class itself. It is not with the philosophers, literati, and most accomplished classes in higher life, that men would ever think of comparing the untutored rustics and the workmen in stones and timber. These orders would seem less related in virtue of their common nature, that separated by the wide disparity of its cultivation. They would appear so immeasurably asunder, such antipodes in the sphere of human existence, that the state of the one could afford no standard for judging of the defects or wants of the other. Nothing would seem more idle than to speculate seriously on possibilities of approximation between them. The richer were the one class in what was deemed to verify the nobleness of the rational nature, the less

would any question be suggested whether some slight humble participation might not be afforded to relieve the poverty of the other. It was in a speculation which abstained from measuring the distance between extremes, and amusing itself, as with a curious fact, in seeing that the same material can be made into kings and heroes and into helots ; it was in a speculation which, instead of dwelling on the view of what was impossible to the common people in a comparative reference to the highest classes of their fellow men, considered what was left practicable to them within their own narrow allotment, that the schemes originated which have actually given to a proportion of them that humble participation. There has thus been formed a small improved order of people amidst the multitude ; and it is between these and the general state of that multitude that the grievous contrast arises.

It certainly were ridiculous enough to fix on a labouring man and his family, and affect to deplore that he is doomed not to behold the depths and heights of science, not to expatiate over the wide field of history, not to luxuriate among the delights, refinements, and infinite diversities of literature ; and that his family are not growing up in a training to every high accomplishment, after the pat-

tern of some family in the neighbourhood, favoured by fortune, and high ability and cultivation in those at their head. But it is a quite different thing to take this man and his family, unable perhaps, both himself and they, even to read, and therefore sunk in all the debasement of ignorance, — and compare them with another man and family in the same sphere of life, but who have received the utmost improvement within the reach of that situation, and are sensible of its value; who often employ the leisure hour in reading, (sometimes socially and with intermingled converse,) some easy work of instruction or innocent entertainment; are detached, in the greatest degree that depends on their choice, from society with the absolute vulgar; have learnt much decorum of manners; can take an intelligent interest in the great events of the world; and are prevented, by what they read and hear, from forgetting that there is another world. It is, we repeat, after thus seeing what may, and in particular instances does exist, in a humble condition, that we are compelled to regard as really a dreadful spectacle the still prevailing state of our national population.

We shall endeavour to exhibit, though on a small scale, and perhaps not with a very

strict regularity of proportion and arrangement, a faithful representation of the most serious of the evils conspicuous in an uneducated state of the people. Much of the description and reflections must be equally applicable to other countries; for there is nothing which they possess so much in common, except the mere general properties of man and nature, as a neglected degraded condition of their people. But it is here at home that we feel this condition the most painfully forced on our attention; and here also of all the world it is, that such a state of things forms the heaviest reproach to the nation for having suffered it.

The subject is to the last degree unattractive, except to a misanthropic disposition; or to that, perhaps, of a stern theological polemic, when tempted to be pleased with the very superfluity of the means for overwhelming the opposers of the doctrine which asserts the radical corruption of our nature. It is a subject of which the imagery is low, and liable to excite disgust. It is wholly unsusceptible of that magnificence of display, on account of which some of the most cruel evils that have preyed on mankind have ever been favourite themes with writers ambitious to shine in description. Nor does it spread before us a wild and varying scene, where a

crowd of fantastic shapes, (as in a view of the pagan superstitions,) may stimulate and beguile the imagination though we are looking on a great evil. It is a gloomy monotony; Death without his dance. The representation, moreover, while it shews one large class degraded and unhappy, reflects ungraciously, by an imputation of neglect of duty, on other classes who may be supposed to be called upon to look at the spectacle. There is, besides, but little power of arresting the attention in a description of familiar matter of fact, plain to every one's observation. Yet ought it not to be so much the better, when we are pleading for a certain mode of benevolent exertion, that every one can see, and that no one can deny, the sad reality of all that forms the object, and imposes the duty, of that exertion?

Look, then, at the neglected ignorant class in their childhood and youth. One of the most obvious circumstances is *the perfect non-existence in their minds of any notion or question what their life is for, taken as a whole.* Among a crowd of trifling and corrupting ideas that soon find a place in them, there is never the thought,—For what purpose am I alive? What is it that I should be? Does it signify *what* I may be? But surely, it is with

ill omen that the human creature advances into life without such a thought. He should, as soon as the opening of his faculties renders it practicable, be made sensible that something more belongs to his existence than what he is about to-day, and what he may be about to-morrow. He should be made aware that the course of activity he is beginning ought to have a leading principle of direction, some predominant aim, a general and comprehensive purpose, paramount to the divers particular objects he may pursue. It is not more necessary for him to understand that he must in some way be employed in order to live, than to be apprised that life itself, that existence itself, is of no value but as a mere capacity of something which he should realize, and of which he may fail. He should be brought to apprehend that there is a something essential for him to *be*, which he will not *become* merely by passing from one day into another, by eating and sleeping, by growing taller and stronger, seizing what share he can of noisy sport, and performing appointed portions of work; and that if he do *not* become that which he *cannot* become without a general and leading purpose, he will of necessity be worthless and unhappy.

We are not entertaining the extravagant fancy that it is possible, except in some rare

instances of premature thoughtfulness, to turn inward into deep habitual reflection, the spirit that naturally goes outward, in these vivacious, active, careless beings, when we assert that it is possible to teach many of them with a degree of success, in very juvenile years, to apprehend and admit such a principle. We have many times seen this exemplified in fact. We have found some of them appearing apprised that *life is for something as a whole*; and that, to answer that general purpose, a mere succession of interests and activities, each engaged in for its own sake, will not suffice. They could comprehend, that the multiplicity of interests and activities in detail, instead of constituting of themselves the purpose of life, were to be regarded as things subordinate and subservient to a general interest, and judged of, selected, and regulated, in reference and amenableness to it.—By the presiding comprehensive purpose, we do not specifically and exclusively mean a direction of the mind to the *religious* concern, viewed as in *contradistinction* to other interests; but an aim which is guided by that collective notion of the person's interests in which they all coalesce into one; an aim that proceeds in fulfilment of a scheme which combines the religious concern with all the other concerns for the sake of which it is

worth while to dispose the activities of life into a *plan* of conduct, instead of leaving them to custom and casualty. The scheme will bear toward ultimate felicity ; but will also take large account of what must be thought of, and what may be hoped for, in relation to the present life.

Now, we no more expect to find any such idea of a presiding purpose of life, than we do the profoundest philosophical reflection, in the minds of the uneducated children and youth. They think nothing at all about their existence and life in any moral reference whatever. They know not any good that it is to have been endowed with a rational rather than a brute nature, excepting that thus they have the privilege of tyrannising over brutes. They think nothing about what they shall become, and very little about what shall become of them. There is nothing that tells them of the relations, for good and evil, of present things with future and remote ones. The whole energy of their moral and intellectual nature goes out as in brute instinct on present objects, to make the most they can of them for the moment, taking the chance for whatever may be next. They are left totally devoid even of the thought, that what they are doing is the beginning of a life ; their whole faculty is engrossed in the

doing of it ; and whether it signify any thing to the next ensuing stage of life, or to the last, is as foreign to any calculation of theirs, as the idea of reading their destiny in the stars. Not only, therefore, is there an entire preclusion from their minds of the faintest hint of a monition, that they should live for the grand final object pointed to by religion, but also, for the most part, of all consideration of the attainment of a reputable condition and character in life. The creature endowed with faculties for “ large discourse, looking before and after,” capable of so much design, respectability, and happiness, even in its present short stage, and entering on an endless career, is seen in the abasement of snatching, as its utmost reach of purpose, at the low amusements and vices of each passing day ; and cursing its privations and tasks, and often also the sharers of those privations, and the exactors of those tasks.

When these are grown up into the mass of mature population, what will it be, as far as their quality shall go toward constituting the quality of the whole ? Alas ! it will be, to that extent, just a continuation of the ignorance, debasement, and misery, so conspicuous in the bulk of the people now. And to *what* extent ? Calculate *that* from the unquestionable fact, that hundreds of thou-

sands of the human beings in our land, between the ages, say of eight and sixteen, are at this hour thus abandoned to go forward into life at random, as to the use they shall make of it,—if, indeed, it can be said to be at random, when there is strong tendency and temptation to evil, and no discipline to good. Looking at this proportion, does any one think there will be, on the whole, wisdom and virtue enough in the community to render this black infusion imperceptible or innoxious?

But are we accounting it absolutely inevitable that the sequel must be in full proportion to this present fact,—*must* be every thing that this fact threatens, and *can* lead to,—as we should behold persons carried down in a mighty torrent, where all interposition is impossible, or as the Turks look at the progress of a conflagration or an epidemic? It is in order to “frustrate the tokens” of such melancholy divination, to arrest something of what a destructive power is in the act of carrying away, to make the evil spirit find, in the next stages of his march, that all his enlisted host have not followed him, and to quell somewhat of the triumph of his boast, “My name is Legion, for we are many;”—it is for this that the friends of improvement, and of mankind, are called upon for

efforts beyond those which are requisite for maintaining, in its present extent of operation, the system of expedients for instructing, before it be too late, the yet youthful tribe.

Another obvious circumstance in the state of the untaught class is, *that they are abandoned, in a direct unqualified manner, to seek their chief good in sensual gratification.* The very narrow scope to which their condition limits them in the pursuit of this, will not prevent its being to them the most desirable thing in existence, since for any other mode of happiness their scope is narrower still. By the very constitution of the human nature, the mind seems half to belong to the senses, it is so shut within them, affected by them, dependent on them, and impotent but through their medium. And while, by this necessary hold which they have on what would call itself a spiritual being, they absolutely will engross to themselves, as of clear right, a large share of its interest and exercise, they will strive to possess themselves of the other half too. And they will have it, if it has not been carefully otherwise claimed and preoccupied. And when the senses have thus usurped the whole mind for their service, how will you get any of it back? Try, if you will, whether this is a thing so easy to be done. Present

to the minds so engrossed with the desires of the senses, that their main action is but in these desires and the consideration how to fulfil them,—offer to their view nobler objects, which are appropriate to the spiritual being, and observe whether that being promptly shews a sensibility to the worthier objects, as congenial to its nature, and, obsequious to the new attraction, disengages itself from what has wholly absorbed it.

Nor would we require that the experiment be made by presenting something of a precisely religious nature, to which there is an innate aversion for religion's own sake, separately from its being an intellectual thing,—an aversion even though the mental faculties *be* cultivated. It may be made with something that ought to have power to please the mind as simply a being of intelligence, imagination, and sentiment,—a pleasure which may not be altogether foreign, in some of its modes, to the senses themselves; as when, for instance, it is to be imparted by something fine or grand in the natural world, or in the works of art. Let this refined solicitation be addressed to the grossly uncultivated, in competition with some low indulgence, with the means, for example, of gluttony and inebriation. See how the subjects of your experiment, (intellectual and moral natures

though they are,) answer to these respective offered gratifications. Observe how these more dignified attractives encounter and overpower the meaner, and reclaim the usurped, debased spirit. Or rather, observe whether they can avail, for more than an instant, so much as to divide its attention. But indeed you can foresee the result so well, that you may spare the labour. Still less could you deem it to be of the nature of an experiment, (which implies uncertainty,) to make the attempt with ideal forms of nobleness or beauty, with intellectual, poetical, or moral captivations.

Yet this addiction to sensuality, beyond all competition of worthier modes and means of interest, does not altogether refuse to admit of some division and diversion of the vulgar feelings, in favour of some things of a more mental character, provided they be vice. A man so neglected in his youth that he cannot spell the names of Alexander, Cæsar, or Bonaparte, may feel the strong incitement of ambition. This, instead of raising him, may only propel him forward, so to speak, on the level of his debased condition and society, and it is a favourable supposition that makes him "the best wrestler on the green," or a manful pugilist; for it is probable his grand delight may be, to indulge himself

in an oppressive insolent arrogance toward such as are unable to maintain a strife with him on terms of fair rivalry, making his will the law to all whom he can force or frighten into submission.

The devotement to coarse sensuality admits, again, of occasional competition and suspension in behalf of the pleasures of cruelty; a flagrant characteristic, generally, of uncultivated degraded human creatures, both where the whole community consists of such, as in barbarous and savage tribes, and where they form a large portion of it, as in this country. It is hardly worth while to put in words, the acknowledgment of the obvious and odious fact, that a considerable share of mental attainment is sometimes inefficient to extinguish this infernal principle of human nature, by which it is gratifying to witness and inflict suffering, even separately from any prompting of revenge. All of us have seen examples of this inefficiency. But why do we regard them as peculiarly hateful, and brand them with the most intense reprobation, but *because* it is judged the fair and natural tendency of mental cultivation to repress that principle, insomuch that a surpassing virulence of depravity is evinced by the failure of that discipline to produce this effect? But then, think of that discipline being almost

wholly withheld, so that the ordinary, and the extraordinary, degrees of this execrable propensity may go into action in their unmitigated malignity.

And such a consequence of the absence of that discipline, is manifest in the lower ranks of our self-extolled community; notwithstanding a diminution, which the progress of education and religion has effected, in certain of the once most favourite and customary practices of cruelty. These very practices, nevertheless, still keep their ground in some of the more heathenish parts of the country; and if it were possible, that the more improved notions and taste of the more respectable classes could admit of any countenance being given to their revival in the more civilized parts, it would be found that even there too large a portion of the people is, to this hour, left in a disposition which would welcome the return of savage exhibitions. It may be, that some of the most atrocious forms and degrees of cruelty would hardly please the greater number of them; for there have been instances in which an English populace has shewn indignation at extreme and *unaccustomed* perpetrations of this kind, even to the extent of cruelly revenging them. Perhaps not many would be delighted with such scenes as those which, in the *Place de Grève*,

used to be a gratification to a multitude of all ranks of the Parisians. But how many odious facts, characteristic of our people, have come under every one's observation.

Who has not seen numerous instances of the delight with which advantage is taken of weakness or simplicity, to practise upon them some sly mischief, or inflict some open mortification; and of the unrepressed glee with which many spectators can witness or abet the malice? And if, in such a case, an indignant observer has hazarded a remark or expostulation to any of them, the full stare, and the quickly succeeding laugh and retort, of brutal scorn, have thrown open to his revolting sight the state of the recess within, where the moral sentiments are; and shewn how much the perceptions and notions had been indebted to the cares of the instructor. Could he help thinking what was deserved somewhere, by individuals or by the local community collectively, for suffering a being to grow up to quite or nearly the complete dimensions and features of manhood, with so vile a thing within it in substitution for what a soul should be? We need not remark, what every one has noticed, how much the vulgar are amused by seeing vexatious or injurious incidents, (if only not quite disastrous or tragical ones,) befalling persons

against whom they can have no resentment; how ferocious often their temper and means of revenge when they *have* causes of resentment; or how intensely delighted, (in company, it is true, with many that are called their betters,) in beholding several of their fellow-mortals, whether in anger or athletic competition, covering each other with bruises, deformity, and blood.

Our institutions, however, protect, in some considerable degree, man against man, as being framed in a knowledge of what would else become of the community. But observe a moment what are the dispositions of the vulgar as indulged, and with little preventive interference of those institutions, on the inferior animals. To a large proportion of the class it is, in their youth, one of the most vivid exhilarations to witness the terrors and anguish of living beings. If there is heard at a distance a howl that strikes you as almost infernal, one of your first conjectures in explanation would be, that a company of rationals may be witnessing the writhings, agonies, and cries, of some animal struggling for escape or for life, while it is suffering the infliction, perhaps, of stones and kicks, or the application of more directly fatal instruments of violence. If you hear in the clamour a sudden burst of fiercer exultation,

you will surmise that just then the deadly blow or stab has been given. There is hardly an animal on the whole face of the country, of size enough, and enough within reach, to be a sufficient object of attention, that would not be persecuted to death if no consideration of ownership interposed. The children of the uncultivated families are allowed, without a check, to exercise and improve the hateful disposition, on flies, young birds, and other feeble and harmless creatures; and they are actually encouraged to do it on what, under the denomination of vermin, are represented in the formal character of enemies, almost in such a sense as if a moral responsibility attached to them, and they were therefore not only to be destroyed as a nuisance, but deserving to be punished as offenders.

The destruction of sympathy, with the consequent carelessness of inflicting pain, combined inseparably as this will probably be, with the *love* of inflicting it, must be confirmed by the horrid spectacle of slaughter all over the land; a spectacle sought for gratification by the children and youth of the lower order; and in many places so publicly exhibited that they cannot well avoid seeing it, and its savage preliminary circumstances, sometimes directly wanton aggravations, perhaps in revenge of a struggle to

resist or escape, perhaps in rage at the awkward manner in which the victim adjusts itself to the convenient position for suffering. Horrid, we call the prevailing practice, because it is the infliction, on millions of sentient and innocent creatures every year, in what calls itself a humane and christian nation, of anguish perfectly unnecessary to the purpose. And it is a flagrant dishonour to such a country, and to the class that virtually, by rank, and formally, by official power, have presided over its economy, one generation after another, that so hideous a fact should never, as far as we can remember to have heard, have moved even a thought of authoritative interference. An inconceivable daily amount of suffering, inflicted on unknown thousands of creatures, dying in slow anguish, when their death might be without pain as being instantaneous, is accounted no deformity in the social system, no incongruity with the national profession of a religion of which the essence is charity and mercy, nothing to sully the polish, or offend the refinement, of what will be seriously asserted to be, in its higher portions, a preeminently civilized and humanized community. Precious and well protected polish and refinement, and humanity, and christian civilization! to which it is a matter of easy indiffer-

ence to know, that in the neighbourhood of their abode, in whatever part of the whole country it may be, those tortures of butchery are, unnecessarily, inflicted, which could not be actually witnessed by persons in whom the pretension to these fine qualities is any thing better than affectation, without sensations of horror.

They are known to be inflicted, and yet this is a trifle not worth an effort toward innovation on inveterate custom, on the part of the influential classes ; who may be far more worthily intent on changing the fashion of a dress, or possibly some new refinement in the cookery of the dead bodies of the victims. It is a matter far below legislative attention ; while the powers of definition are exhausted under the stupendous accumulation of regulations and interdictions for the good order of society. So hardened may the moral sense of a community be by universal and continual custom, that we are perfectly aware these very remarks will provoke the ridicule of many persons, including, it is possible enough, some who may think it quite consistent to be talking at the very same time of christianity and benevolent zeal ; and will provoke it not at all the less for their being unable to deny, or affect to deny, that the manner of the practice referred to steels and

depraves, to a dreadful degree, a vast number of the human beings immediately employed in it; and, as a spectacle, powerfully contributes to confirm, in a much greater number, exactly that which it is, by eminence, the object of moral tuition to counteract—men's disposition to make light of all suffering but their own. This one thing, this not caring for what may be endured by other beings made liable to suffering, is the very essence of the depravity which is so fatal to our race in their social constitution. Certainly the *source* of all that is morally wrong is estrangement from the Supreme Goodness; and this in itself constitutes the malady in its primary form: it must be the worst iniquity to be evil-affected toward the Best and Greatest Being. But when we come down to look at the perversion in the human disposition as it affects the race among themselves, we see that the great principle of their social depravity and wretchedness, is this carelessness of each respecting the pains of others; aggravated as this selfish hardness so easily and so often becomes, into the malignity which can delight to see or cause their suffering. And yet, we repeat it, a civilized and christian nation feels not the slightest self-displacency, for its allowing a certain unhappy but necessary part in the economy of the world to be

executed, (by preference to a harmless method,) in a manner which probably does as much to corroborate in the vulgar class this essential principle of depravity, as all the expedients of melioration yet applied are doing to expel it.

Were it not vain and absurd to muse on supposable new principles in the constitution of the moral system, there is one that we might have been tempted to wish for, namely, that, of all suffering *unnecessarily* and wilfully inflicted by man on any class of sentient existence, a bitter intimation and participation might be conveyed to him through a mysterious law of nature, enforcing an avenging sympathy in severe proportion to that suffering, on all the men, be where they might, who were really accountable for its being inflicted

After children and youth are trained to behold with something worse than hardened indifference, with a feeling of stimulant amusement, the sufferings of creatures dying for the service of man, it is no wonder if they are barbarous in their treatment of those that serve him by their life. And in fact nothing is more obvious as a prevailing disgrace to our nation, than the cruel habits of the lower class toward the labouring animals placed within their power. These animals have no

security in their best condition and most efficient services ; but generally the diabolic disposition is the most fully exercised on those that have been already the greatest sufferers. Meeting, wherever we go, with some of these starved, abused, exhausted figures, we shall not unfrequently meet with also another figure accompanying them,—that of a ruffian, young or old, who, with a visage of rage, and accents of hell, is wreaking his utmost malevolence on a wretched victim for being slow in performing, or quite failing to perform, what the excess of loading, and perhaps the feebleness of old age, have rendered difficult or absolutely impracticable ; or for shrinking from an effort to be made by a pressure on bleeding sores, or for losing the right direction through blindness, and that itself perhaps occasioned by hardship or savage violence. Many of the exacters of animal labour really seem to resent it as a kind of presumption and insult in the slave, that it should be any thing else than a machine, that the living being should betray under its toils that it suffers, that it is pained, weary, or reluctant. And if, by outrageous abuse, it should be excited to some manifestation of resentment, that is a crime for which the sufferer would be likely to incur such a fury and repetition of blows and lacerations, as to die on the spot,

but for an interfering admonition of interest against destroying so much property, and losing so much service. When that service has utterly exhausted, often before the term of old age, the strength of those wretched animals, there awaits many of them a last short stage of still more remorseless cruelty; that in which it is become a doubtful thing whether the utmost efforts to which the emaciated diseased sinking frame can be forced by violence, are worth the trouble of that violence, the delays and accidents, and the expense of the scanty supply of subsistence. As they must at all events very soon perish, it has ceased to be of any material consequence, on the score of interest, how grossly they may be abused; and their tormentors seem delighted with this release from all restraint on their dispositions. Those dispositions, as indulged in some instances, when the miserable creatures are formally consigned to be destroyed, cannot be much exceeded by any thing we can attribute to fiends. Some horrid exemplifications were adduced, not as single casual circumstances, but as usual practices, by a patriotic senator some years since, in endeavouring to obtain a legislative enactment in mitigation of the sufferings of the brute tribes. The design vanished to nothing in the House of Commons, under the

effect of argument and ridicule from a person distinguished for intellectual cultivation ; whose resistance was not only against that specific measure, but avowedly against the principle itself on which *any* measure of the same tendency could ever be founded.* Nor could any victory have pleased him better, probably, than one which contributed to prolong the barbarism of the people, as the best security, he deemed, for their continuing fit to labour at home and fight abroad.

If some advocate for things as they are in the lower classes, should be inclined to interpose here with a remark, that after *such* a reference, we have little right to ascribe to those classes, as if it were peculiarly one of their characteristics, the insensibility to the sufferings of the brute creation, and to number it formally among the results of the "lack of knowledge," we can only reply, that however those of higher order may explode any attempt to make the most efficient authority of the nation bear repressively upon the evil, and however it may in other ways be abetted by them, it is, at any rate, in those inferior classes chiefly that the actual perpetrators of it are found. It is not a little to say in favour

* Lord Erskine's memorable Bill, triumphantly scouted by the late Mr. Windham.

of cultivation, that it does, *generally* speaking, render those who have the benefit of it incapable of practising, *themselves*, those cruelties which they may be virtually countenancing, by some things which they do, and some things which they omit or refuse to do.

The proper place would perhaps have been nearer the beginning of this description of the characteristics of our uneducated people, for one so notorious, and one entering so much into the essence of the evils already named, as that we mention next;—*a rude, limited, unsteady, and often perverted, sense of right and wrong in general.*

It is curious to look into a large volume of religious casuistry, the work of some divine of a former age, (for instance Bishop Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium*,) with the reflection what a conscience disciplined in the highest degree might be; and then to observe what this regulator of the soul actually is where there has been no sound discipline of the reason, and where there is no deep religious sentiment to rectify the perceptions in the absence of an accurate intellectual discrimination of things. This sentiment being wanting, dispositions and conduct cannot be taken account of according to the distinction between holiness and sin; and in the absence of instructed

understanding, they cannot be brought to the test of the distinguishing law between propriety and turpitude; nor estimated upon any comprehensive notion of utility. The evidence of all this is thick and close around us; so that every serious observer has been struck and almost shocked to observe, in what a very small degree conscience is a *necessary* attribute of the human creature; and how nearly a non-entity the whole system of moral principles may be, as to any recognition of it by an unadapted spirit. While that system is of a substance veritable and eternal, and stands forth in its exceeding breadth, marked with the strongest characters and prominences, it comes before these persons with hardly the reality or definiteness of a shadow, except in a few matters, if we may so express it, of the grossest bulk. There must be striking evidence of something bad in what is done, or questioned whether to be done, before conscience will come to its duty, or give proof of its existence. There must be a violent alarm of mischief or danger before this drowsy and careless magistrate will interfere. And since occasions thus involving flagrant evil cannot be of frequent occurrence in the life of the generality of the people, it is probable that many of them have considerably protracted exemptions from any interference of

conscience at all ; it is certain that they experience no such pertinacious attendance of it, as to feel habitually a monitory intimation, that without great thought and care they will inevitably do something wrong. But what may we judge and presage of the moral fortunes of a sojourner, of naturally corrupt propensity, in this bad world, who is not haunted, even to a degree of alarm, by this monitory sense, through every day of his life ? What is likely to become of him, if he shall go hither and thither on the scene exempt from all sensible obstruction of the innumerable interdictions which are of a nature too refined for any sense but the vital tenderness of conscience to perceive ?

Obstructions of a more gross and palpable nature he is continually meeting. A large portion of what he is accustomed to see presents itself to him in the character of boundary and prohibition ; on every hand there is something to warn him what he must not do. There are high walls, and gates, and fences, and brinks of torrents and precipices ; in short, an order of things on all sides signifying to him, with more or less of menace,—Thus far, and no further. And he is, in a general way, obsequious to this arrangement. We do not ordinarily expect to see him carelessly transgressing the most decided of the artificial

boundaries, nor daring across those dreadful ones of nature. But the while, as he is nearly destitute of that faculty of the soul which would perceive, (analogously to the effect of coming in contact with something charged with the element of lightning,) the awful interceptive lines of that other arrangement which he is in the midst of as a subject of the laws of God, we see with what insensibility he can pass through those prohibitory significations of the Almighty will, which are to devout men as lines streaming with an infinitely more formidable than material fire. And if we look on to his future course, proceeding under so fatal a deficiency, the consequence foreseen is, that those lines of divine interdiction which he has not conscience to perceive as meant to deter him, he will seem as if he had acquired, through a perverted will, a strong recognition of in another quality—as temptations to attract him.

But to leave these terms of generality, and advert to a few particulars of illustration:—Recollect how commonly persons of the class described are found utterly violating truth, not in hard emergencies only, but as a habitual practice, and apparently without the slightest reluctance or compunction, their moral sense perfectly at rest under the accu-

mulation of a thousand deliberate falsehoods. It is seen that by far the greater number of them think it no harm to take little unjust advantages in their dealings, by deceptive management; and very many would take the greatest but for fear of temporal consequences; would do it, that is to say, without inquietude of conscience, in the proper sense. It is the testimony of experience, from persons who have had the most to transact with them, that the indispensable rule of proceeding is to assume generally their want of principle, and leave it to time and prolonged trial to establish, rather slowly, the individual exceptions. Those unknowing admirers of human nature, or of English character, who are disposed to exclaim against this as an illiberal rule, may be recommended to act on what they will therefore deem a liberal one—at their cost.

That power of established custom, which is so great, as we had occasion to shew, on the moral sense of better instructed persons, has its dominion complete over that of the vulgar; insomuch that the most flagrant unequivocal iniquity of a practice long allowed, shall hardly bring even to their mere recollection the common acknowledged rule not to do as we would wish not done to us. From recent accounts it appears, that the entire

coast of our island is not yet clear of those people called *wreckers*, who felt not a scruple to appropriate whatever they could seize of the lading of vessels cast ashore, including, often, what they could tear from the personal possession of the unfortunate beings who might be escaping but just alive from the most dreadful peril. The cruelty we have so largely attributed to our English vulgar, never recoils on them in a compulsion to detest themselves. The habitual indulgence of the irascible, vexatious, and malicious tempers, to the plague or terror of all within reach, scarcely ever becomes a subject of judicial estimate, as a character viewed in the abstract, with then a reflection of that estimate on the man's own self to whom the character belongs. He reflects but just enough to say to himself that it is all right and deserved, and unavoidable too, for he is unpardonably crossed and provoked ; nor will he be driven from this self-approval, though it be evident to every one else that the provocations are comparatively slight. The inconvenience and vexation incident to low libertinism, will make the offenders fret at themselves indeed for having been such fools, but it is in general with an extremely trifling degree of the sense of guilt. Suggestions of reprehension, in even the discreetest terms, and from persons con-

fessedly the best authorized to make them, would very commonly be answered by a grinning defying carelessness, or abusive retort; instead of any betrayed signs of even an internal acknowledgment of deserving reproof.

And while thus the censure of a fellow-mortal finds nothing in their minds to meet it, in the way of owning its justice, this stupid self-complacency is undisturbed also on the side toward heaven. A mere philosopher, that should make little account of religion, beyond its adaptedness to be applied to enforce and aggravate the sense of obligation with respect to rules of conduct, and would not, provided it may have this effect, care much about its truth or falsehood,—might be disposed to assert, that the ignorant and debased part of the population, of this christian and protestant country, are but so much the worse for the riddance of some parts of the superstitions of former ages. There were admitted even in those times, he might say, *some* right injunctions of morality, considered as an external practical concern. These might be, and actually were, infixed in the popular mind as matter of conscience, by the great array of things pretendedly divine and demi-divine which surrounded, and pressed closely and powerfully on, the mind of the

multitude. Whereas now, when this great array is vanished, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to enforce moral principles and rules on the ignorant portion of the people with the mighty authority of Divine sanction; since they have not, in their exemption from the superstitions of their ancestors, come under any solemn and commanding effect of the true idea of the Divine Majesty. And it is undeniable that this is the state of conscience among them. The vague faint notion, as they conceive it, of a being who is said to be the creator, governor, lawgiver, and judge, and who is somewhere in the sky, has not, to many of them, the smallest force of intimidation from evil, at least when they are in health and daylight. One of the large sting-armed insects of the air does not alarm them less. A certain transitory fearfulness that occasionally comes upon them, points more to the Devil, and perhaps sometimes the ghosts of the dead, than to the Almighty. It may be, indeed, that this feeling is in its ultimate principle, if it were ever followed up so far, an acknowledgment of justice and power in God, reaching to wicked men through these mysterious agents; who though intending no service to him, but actuated by dispositions of their own, (malignant in the greatest of them, and supposed inauspicious in the

others,) are yet carrying into effect his hostility. But it is little beyond these proximate objects of apprehension that many minds extend their awe of invisible spiritual existence. Even some notion really entertained by them of the greatness of God, may be entertained in such a manner as to have but slight power to restrain the inclinations to sin, or to impress the sense of guilt after it is committed. He is too great, they readily say, to mind the little matters that such creatures as we may do amiss; they can do *him* no harm. The idea, too, of his bounty, is of such unworthy consistence as to be a protection against all conscious reproach of ingratitude toward him:—he has made us to need all this that it is said he does for us; and it costs him nothing, it is no labour, and he is not the less rich; and besides, we have toil, and want, and plague enough, notwithstanding any thing that he gives.

that
It is probable this unhappiness of their condition, oftener than any other cause, brings God into their thoughts, and that as a being against whom they have a quarrel on account of it. And this strongly assists the reaction against whatever would enforce the sense of guilt on the conscience. When he has done so little for us, (something like this is the sentiment,) he cannot think it any such great

matter if we *do* sometimes come a little short of his commands. There is no doubt that their recollections of him as a being to murmur against for their allotment, are more frequent, more dwelt upon, and with more of an excited feeling, than their recollections of him as a being whom they ought to have loved and served, but have offended against. The very idea of such offence, as one of the things which constitute wickedness, is so slightly conceived, (because he is invisible, and because he is secure against all injury,) that if the thoughts of one of these persons *should*, by some rare occasion, be thrown into the direction of unwillingly seeing his own faults, it is probable his impiety would appear the most inconsiderable thing in the account; that he would easily forgive himself the negation of all acts and feelings of devotion toward the Supreme Being, and the countless multiplication of insults to him by profane language.

To conclude this part of the unhappy statement—it may be observed of the class in question, that they have but very little notion of guilt, or possible guilt, in any thing but external practice. That busy interior existence, which is the moral person, genuine and complete; the thoughts, imaginations, volitions; the motives, projects, deliberations,

devices, the indulgence of the ideas of what they cannot or dare not practically realize,—all this, we have reason to believe, passes nearly exempted from jurisdiction, even of that feeble and undecisive kind which *may* occasionally attempt an interference with their actions. They do indeed take such notice of the quality of these things within, as to be aware that some of them are not to be disclosed in their communications ; which prudential caution has of course little to do with conscience, when the things so withheld are internally cherished in perfect disregard of the Omniscient Observer, and with hardly the faintest monition that the essence of the guilt is the same, with only a difference in degree, in intending or deliberately desiring an evil, and in acting it.

It is not natural obtuseness of mental faculty that we are attributing, all this while, to the uneducated class of our people, in thus exposing the defectiveness of their discernment between right and wrong. If it were, there might arise somewhat of the consolation afforded in contemplating some of the very lowest of the savage tribes of mankind, by the idea that such outcasts of the rational nature must stand very nearly divested of accountability, through absolute natural want of mind. But in the barbarians of our coun-

try we shall often observe a very competent, and now and then an abundant, share of native sense. We may see it evinced in respect to the very questions of morality, in cases where they are quite compelled, as will occasionally happen, to feel themselves brought within the cognizance of one of its plainest rules. In such cases we have witnessed a sharpness and activity of intellect which have excited almost our admiration. What contrivance of deception, and artful evasion. What dexterity of quibble, and captious objection, and petty sophistry. What vigilant observance how the plea in justification takes effect, and address in changing it if they perceive it is not the right one. What quickness to avail themselves of any mistake, or apparent concession, in the examiner or reprover. What readiness of resource for reply or subterfuge. What copious rhetoric in exaggeration of the cause which tempted to do wrong, or of the great good hoped to be effected by the little deviation from the right, —a good surely enough to excuse so trifling an impropriety. What facility of placing between themselves and the censure, the recollected example of some good man who has been “overtaken in a fault.”

Here is mind, after all, we have been prompted to exclaim; mind educating itself

to evil, in default of that discipline which should have educated it to good. How much of the wisdom of evil, (if we may be allowed the expression,) there is faculty enough in the neglected corrupt popular mass of this nation to attain, by the exercise into which the individual's mind is carried by its own impulse, and in which he may every where and every hour find ample co-operation. Each of these self-improvers in depraved sense has the advantage of finding himself among a great tribe of similar improvers, forming an immense school, as if for the promotion of this very purpose; where they all teach by a competition in learning; where the rude faculty which is not expanded into intelligence, is, however, sharpened into cunning; where the spirit which cannot grow into an eagle, may take the form and action of a snake. This advantage, that there should not be a diminution of the superabundant plenty of associates always at hand, to assist each man in making the most of his native intellect for its least worthy use, has been from age to age secured to our populace, as if it had been the most valuable birthright of Englishmen. Whatever else the person born to the inheritance of low life was destined to find in it, the national state had made as sure to him as it had before made the same privilege to his

ancestors, that the generality of his equals should be found fit and ready to work with him in the acquirement of a depraved shrewdness.

But while the bulk of the people have been, in every period, abandoned to such a process of educating themselves and one another, where has been that character of parental guardianship, which seems to be ascribed when poets, orators, and patriots, are inspired with tropes, and talk of England and her children? This imperial matron of their rhetoric seems to have little cared how much she might be disgraced in the larger portion of her progeny, or how little cause they might have to all eternity to remember her with gratitude. She has had far other concern about them, and employment for them, than that of their being taught the value of their spiritual nature, and carefully trained to be enlightened, good, and happy. Laws against crime, it is true, she has enacted for them in liberal quantity. She has also maintained public sabbath observances to remind them of religion, of which observances the reading of a Book of Sports was, at one period, long after her adoption of the reformation in religion, an indispensable part. But she might plainly see what such provisions did *not* accomplish. It was a glaring fact before her eyes, that the

majority of her children had far more of the mental character of a colony from some barbarian nation, than of that which an enlightened and christian state might have been expected to impart. She had most ample resources indeed for supplying the remedy; but, provided that the productions of the soil and the workshop were duly forthcoming, she thought it of no consequence, it should seem, that the operative hands belonged to degraded minds. And then, too, as at all times her lofty ambition destined a good proportion of them to the consumption of martial service, she perhaps judged that the less they were trained to think, the more fit they might be to be actuated mechanically, as an instrument of blind impetuous force. Or perhaps she thought it would be rather an inconsistency, to be making much of the inner existence of a thing which was to be so uncere- moniously cut or dashed to pieces. And besides, a certain measure of instruction to think, especially if consisting, in a considerable part, of the inculcation of religion, might have done something to disturb that notion, (so worthy of a Mahomedan creed,) which she was by no means desirous to expel from her fleets and armies, that death for "king and country" clears off all accounts for sin.

Let us direct our attention a little while to the effects of the privation of knowledge, as they may be seen displayed in the several parts of the economy of life, in the uneducated part of the community. Observe those people in their daily occupations. None of us need be told that, of the prodigious diversity of manual employments, some consist of, or include, operations of such minuteness or complexity, and so much demanding nicety, arrangement, or combination, as to necessitate the constant and almost entire attention of the mind; nor that nearly all of them must require its full attention at times, at particular stages, changes, and adjustments, of the work. We allow this its full weight, to forbid any extravagant notion of how much it is possible to think of other things during the working time. It is however to be recollected, that persons of a class superior to the numerous one we have in view, take the chief share of the departments of operation which require the most of mental effort,—those which demand extreme precision, or inventive contrivance, or taste, or scientific skill. We may also take into the account of the allotment of employments to the uncultivated multitude, how much facility is acquired by habit, how much use there is of instrumental mechanism, (the grand exempter from the re-

sponsibility that would lie on the mind,) and how merely general and very slight an attention is exacted, in the ordinary course of some of the occupations. These things being considered, we may venture perhaps to assume, on an average of those employments, that the persons engaged in them might be, as much at least as one third part of the time, without detriment to the manual performance, giving the thoughts to other things with attention enough for interest and improvement. This is particularly true of the plainer parts of the labours of agriculture.

But as the case at present is, what does become, during such portion of the time, of the ethereal essence which inhabits the corporeal labourer, this spirit created, it is commonly said and without contradiction, for thought, knowledge, and immortality? If we are really to believe this doctrine of its nature and destiny, (for we are not certain that politicians think so,) can we without regret know, that in very many of the persons in the situations supposed, it suffers a dull absorption, subsides into the mere physical nature, is sunk and sleeping in the animal warmth and functions, and lulled and rocked, as it were, in its lethargy, by the bodily movements in the works which it is not necessary for it to keep habitually awake to direct? In being, at the

same time, under a *general* responsibility for their right execution, it has a kind of license and protection for this somnolency. The employment *is something to be minded*, though but now and then requiring a full attention ; and therefore the performer seems excused from minding any thing else : as a person retained for some service which demands but occasionally an active exercise, will justify the indolence which declines taking in hand any other business in the intervals, under the pretext that he has his appointment ; and so, when not under the immediate calls of that appointment, he will go to sleep, even in the full light of day, with an easy conscience.

Let not any such folly be imputed to us here, as that we are fancying the labouring class, in this age and country, to be placed under a moderate demand of their thoughts for their immediate necessities. Many of them experience, amidst their employment, a severe arrest of those thoughts which the employment itself would leave free. The lot of that class seems to be placed in a melancholy disproportion, between what *must* be given to the cares and toils for mere subsistence, and what *can*, at most, be given to the interests of the nobler part of their nature. It is a sad spectacle, to behold so many myriads of spiritual beings (we repeat the pro-

viso that we may name them so without being interpreted to deny that their proper calling is to work with their hands) doomed to consume a proportion so little short of the whole of their vigour and time, in just merely supporting so many bodies in the struggle to live.

When the present times are adverted to in speaking of this struggle to live, we of course mean by it something more than that circumstance of the general lot of humanity which is expressed in the sentence, "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread." We put the emphasis on the peculiar aggravation of that circumstance in this part of the world at this time, by the adventitious effect of some dreadful disorder of the social economy, in consequence of which the utmost exertions of the body and mind together but barely suffice, in some instances do not suffice, for the mere protraction of life—comfortable life being altogether out of the question. The course of the administration of the civilized states, and the recent dire combustion into which they have almost unanimously rushed, as in emulation which of them should, with the least reserve, and with the most desperate rapidity, annihilate the resources which should have been for the subsistence and competence of their people, have resulted in such desti-

tution and misery in this country as were never known before, except as immediately inflicted by the local visitation of some awful calamity. The state of very many of our people, at this hour, is nearly what might be conceived as the consequence of a failure of the accustomed produce of the earth.

There is no wish to deny or underrate the additions made to the evil by the intervention of causes, of which the operation admits of being traced in some measure distinctly from the effect of this grand one. They may be traced in an operation which is *distinguishable*; but it were most absurd to pretend that they, that *any* causes, can have had their operation in *independence* of that cause which has invaded with its effects every thing that has an existence or a name in the social system. And it were simply monstrous to attribute the main substance of so wide and oppressive an evil to causes of any debateable quality and subtle speculation, while there is glaring in sight a cause of stupendous magnitude which, (unless the nature of all things is reversed,) *could not possibly do otherwise* than produce immense and calamitous effects. It would be as if a man were prying about for this and the other cause of damage, to account for the aspect of a region which has recently been devastated by inundations or earth-

quakes. It has become much a fashion to explain the distresses of a country on any principles, rather than those which are taught by all history and prominently manifest in the nature of things. And airs of superior intelligence shall be assumed, on hearing a man fix the main charge of national exhaustion and distress on the nation's consuming its own strength in an unquenchable fury to destroy that of others ; just as if this had never been known to result in poverty and distress, and it were perfectly inexplicable how it should ! This is partly an affectation of science, accompanied, it is likely, by somewhat of that sincere extravagance with which the acquirer of any new principles in a science is apt to account them the comprehension of all wisdom, intellectual nostrums that will explain every thing. But we suspect that in many instances this substitution of subordinate causes for the great substantial one, proceeds from something much worse than such affectation or self-duped extravagance. It is from a resolute determination that martial glory *shall* maintain its ground in human idolatry, and that wars and their promoters shall be justified at all hazards.

We were wishing to introduce a suggestion, how the labouring people's thoughts might be partly employed, during their daily task, and

The paper is just as it has an entire tendency

consistently with industry and good workmanship. But what a state of things is exhibited where the very name of industry, the virtue universally honoured, the topic of so many human and divine inculcations, cannot be spoken without offering a bitter insult; where the heavy toil, denounced on man for his transgression, in the same sentence as death, is in vain implored as the greatest possible privilege; or thought of in despair, as a blessing too great to be attainable; and when the reply of the artisan, to an unwitting admonition, that even amidst his work he might have some freedom for useful thinking, may be, "Thinking! I have no work to confine my thinking; I may, for that, employ it all on other subjects; but those subjects are, whether I please or not, the plenty and luxury in which many creatures of the same kind as myself are rioting, and the starvation which I and my family are suffering."

We hope in Providence, more than in any wisdom or disposition shewn by men, that this melancholy state of things will be alleviated, otherwise than by the extinction of a considerable portion of suffering humanity. We trust to see the time when the christian monitor shall no longer be silenced by the apprehension of such a reply, when he would suggest to the humble class that they should

strive against being reduced to mere machines amidst their manual employments; that it is miserable to have the whole mental existence shrunk and shrivelled as it were to the breadth of the material they are working upon; that the noble interior agent, which lends itself to maintain the external activity, and direct the operations required of the bodily powers for the body's welfare, has eminently a right and claim to have employments on its own account, during such parts of those operations as do not of necessity monopolize its attention. It may claim, in the superintendence of these, a privilege similar to that allowed in the general direction of subordinate agents by a man of science, who will interfere as often as it is necessary, but will not give up all other thought and employment to be a constant mere looker on, during such parts of the operations as are of so ordinary a nature that he could not really fix his attention on them.

But how is the mind of the labourer or artisan to be delivered from the blank and stupified state, during the parts of his employment that do not necessarily engross his thoughts? How, but by its having within some store of subjects for thought; in a word, by the possession of knowledge? How can it be sensibly alive and active, when it is placed fully and decidedly out of commu-

nication with all things that are friendly to intellectual life, all things that apply a beneficial stimulus to the faculties, all things, of this world or another, that are the most inviting or commanding to thought and emotion? We can imagine this ill-fated spirit, thus detached from all vital connexion, secluded from the whole universe, and enclosed as by a wall of incarceration,—we can imagine it sometimes moved with an indistinct longing for its appropriate interests; and going round and round by this dark dead wall, to seek for any spot where there might be a chance of escape, or any crevice where a living element for the soul transpires; and then, as feeling it all in vain, relapsing into inertion and slumber. Some ignorant minds have instinctive impulses of this kind; though far more of them are so deeply stupified as to be habitually much at ease. But let them have received, in their youth and progressively afterwards, a considerable measure of interesting information, respecting, for instance, the many striking objects on the globe they inhabit, the memorable events of past ages, the origin and uses of remarkable works within their view, remaining from ancient times; the causes of effects and phenomena familiar to their observation as now unintelligible facts; the prospects of man,

from the relation he stands in to time, and eternity, and God, explained by the great principles and facts of religion, and that religion declared by a direct revelation from heaven. Let there be fixed in their knowledge so many ideas of these kinds, as might be imparted by a comparatively humble education, (one quite compatible with the destination to a life of ordinary employment,) and even involuntarily the thoughts would often recur to these subjects, in those moments and hours when the manual occupation can, and actually will, be prosecuted with but little of exclusive attention. Slight incidents, casual expressions, would sometimes suggest these subjects; by association they would suggest one another. The mere re-action of a somewhat cultivated spirit against invading dulness, might recall some of the more amusing and elating ones; and they would fall like a gleam of sunshine on the imagination. An emotion of conscience, a self-reflection, an occurring question of duty, a monitory sensation of defective health, would sometimes point to the serious and solemn ones. The mind might thus go a great way, to recreate or profit itself, and, on coming back again, find all safe in the processes of the field or the loom. The man would thus come from these processes with more than the bare earn-

ings to set against the fatigue. There would thus be scattered some appearances to entertain, and some sources and productions to refresh, over what were else a dead and barren flat of existence.

There is no romancing in all this ; we have known instances of its verification to a very pleasing and exemplary extent. We have heard persons of the class in question tell of the exhilarating imaginations, or solemn reflections, which, through the reminiscences of what they had read in youth or more advanced years, had visited their minds ; and put them as it were in communication for a while with diversified, remote, and elevated objects, while in their humble employments under the open sky or the domestic roof. And is not this, (if it be true, after all, that the intellectual immortal nature is by emphasis the man,) is not this vastly better than that this mind should lie nearly as dormant, during the labourer's hours of business, as his attendant of the canine species shall be sometimes seen to do in the corner of the field where he is at work ?

But perhaps it will be said, that the minds of the uncultivated order are not generally in this state of utter inanity during their common employments ; but are often awake and busy enough in recollections, fancies, projects, and

the tempers appropriate ; and that they abundantly shew this when they stop sometimes in their work to talk, or talk as they are proceeding in it. So much the stronger, we answer, the argument for supplying them with knowledge ; for it were better their mental being *were* sunk in lethargy, than busy among the imaged transactions, the wishes, and the schemings, which will be the most likely to occupy the faculties of persons abandoned to ignorance, vulgarity, and therefore probably to vice.

We may add to the representation, the manner in which they spend the part of their time not required to be devoted to the regular, nor to the occasional, exercise of their industry. It is too true that many of them may plead, as they do, that excepting Sunday, the utmost suspension of toil allowed them is little more than what, being caused by weariness, is absolutely needed for complete repose. This is particularly the case of the females, especially those who have the chief cares of the family. Nevertheless, it is within our constant observation, that a considerable proportion of the men, a large one of the younger men, in the less heavily oppressed divisions of our population, do in fact include, for substance, their manual employments within such limits of time, as often to leave

several hours in the day to be spent nearly as they please. And in what manner, for the most part, is this precious time expended by those of no mental cultivation? It is very true, again, that in many departments of labour, a diligent exertion during even this limited space of the day, occasions such a degree of lassitude and heaviness as to render it almost inevitable, especially in certain seasons of the year, to surrender some moments of the spare time, beyond what is necessary for the humble repast, to a kind of listless subsidence of all the powers, corporeal and mental. But after all these allowances fully conceded, a great number in the class under contemplation have in some days several hours, and in the whole six days of the week, on an average of the year, many hours, to be given, as they choose, to useful purposes or to waste; and again we ask, where the mind has been left waste how is that time mostly expended?

If the persons are of a phlegmatic temperament, we shall often see them just simply annihilating those portions of time. They will for an hour, or for hours together, if not disturbed by some cause from without, sit on a bench, or lie down on a bank or hillock, or lean on a wall, or fill the fire-side chair, yielded up to utter vacancy and torpor, not asleep

perhaps, but more exempt from mental excitement than if they were; since the dreams, that would probably visit their slumbers, would most certainly be a more lively train of ideas than any they have awake. Of a piece with this, is the habit, among many of this order of people, of giving formally to sleep as much as one third part, sometimes considerably more, of the twenty-four hours. Certainly there are innumerable cases in which infirmity, care, fatigue, and the comfortlessness and penury of the humble dwelling, effectually plead for a large allowance of this balm of oblivion. But very many surrender themselves to this excess, from destitution of any thing to keep their minds awake, especially in the evenings of the winter. What a contrast is here suggested to the imagination of those who have read Dr. Henderson's, and other recent descriptions, of the habits of the people of Iceland!

These, however, are their most harmless modes of wasting the time. For, while we might think of the many hours merged by them in apathy and needless sleep, with a wish that those hours could be recovered to the account of their existence, we might well think with a wish that the hours could be struck out of it which they may sometimes give, instead, to conversation; in parties

where ignorance, coarse vulgarity, and profaneness, are to support the dialogue, on topics the most to their taste ; always including, as the most welcome to that taste, the depravities and scandals of the neighbourhood ; while all the reproach and ridicule, expended with the warmest good will on those depravities, have uniformly the strange result, of making the censors the less disinclined themselves to practise them, and only a little better instructed how to do it with impunity. In many instances there is the additional mischief, that these assemblings for corrupt communication find their resort at the public house, where intemperance and ribaldry may season each other, if the pecuniary means can be afforded, even at the cost of distress at home.—But without including depravity of this degree, the worthlessness of the communications of a number of grossly ignorant beings is easy to be imagined, besides that most of us have been made judges of their quality by numberless occasions of unavoidably hearing samples of them.

In the finer seasons of the year, much of these leisure spaces of time can be expended out of doors ; and we have still only to refer each one to his own observation of the account to which they are turned, in the lives of beings whose lot allows but so contracted a

portion of time to be, at the best, applied directly to the highest purposes of life.— Here the hater of all such schemes of improvement, as would threaten to turn the lower order into what that hater may probably call Methodists, (a term we venture to interpret for him as meaning thoughtful beings and christians,) comes in with a ready cant of humanity and commiseration. And why, he says, with an affected indignation of philanthropy, why should not the poor creatures enjoy a little fresh air and cheerful sunshine, and have a chance for keeping their health, confined as many of them are, for the greatest part of their time, in narrow squalid rooms, unwholesome work-shops, and every sort of disagreeable places and employments? Very true, we answer; and why should they not be collected in groups by the road side, in readiness to find in whatever passes there occasions for gross jocularities; practising some impertinence, or uttering some jeering scurrility, at the expense of persons going by; shouting with laughter at the success of the sport, or as the means to *make* it successful; and all this blended with infernal imprecations, as the very life of the hilarity? Or why should they not form a little conventicle for cursing, blaspheming, and blackguard obstreperousness in the street, about the en-

trance of one of the haunts of intoxication ; where they are perfectly safe from that far worse mischief of a gloomy fanaticism, with which they might have been smitten if seduced to frequent the meeting-house twenty paces off ? Or why should not the children, growing into the stage called youth, be turned loose through the lanes, roads, and fields, to form a brawling impudent rabble, trained by their association to every low vice, and ambitiously emulating, in voice, visage, and manners, the drabs and ruffians of maturer growth ? Or why should not the young men and women collect in clusters, or range about or beyond the neighbourhood in bands, for revel, frolic, and all kinds of coarse mirth, to come back late at night to quarrel with their wretched elders, who perhaps envy them their capacity for such wild gaieties and strollings, while rating them for their disorderly habits ? We say, where can be the harm of all this ? What reasonable and benevolent man would think of making any objection to it ? Reasonable and benevolent,—for these are qualities expressly boasted by the opposers of an improved education of the people, while in such opposition they virtually avow their approbation of all that we have here described.

We have allowed most fully the plea of how little time, *comparatively*, could be af-

forded by the lower classes from their indispensable employments to the concern of mental improvement ; and also that of the fatigue consequent on them, and causing a temporary incapacity of effort in any other way. But when we advert to the actual habits of our neglected young people, we see that, nevertheless, time, strength, and wakefulness, and spring and spirit for exertion, *are* found for a vast deal of busy diversion.

If such is the manner in which the spare time of the week-days goes to waste, and worse, the Sunday is welcomed as giving scope for the same things on a larger scale. It is very striking to consider, that several millions, we may safely assert, of our English people, come to what should be years of discretion, are almost completely exempt from any manner of conscience respecting this seventh part of time, not merely as to any required consecration of it to religion, but as to its being under any claim or of any worth at all, otherwise than for amusement. It is actually regarded by them as a section of time far less under obligation than any other. They take it as so absolutely at their free disposal, by a right so exclusively vested in their taste and will, that a demand made even in behalf of their own most important interests is contemptuously repelled as an inter-

ference. If the idea occurs at all of claims which they have heard that God should make on the hours, it is dismissed with the thought that it really cannot signify to him how creatures, condemned by his appointment to toil all the rest of the week, may wish to spend this one day, on which the secular taskmaster manumits them, and He, the spiritual one, might surely do as much. An immense number pay no attention whatever to any sort of religious worship ; and multitudes of those that do afford an hour to such an observance, do so, many of them as merely a diversification of amusement, and the others by way of taking a license of exemption from any further accountableness for the manner in which they may spend the day. It is the natural consequence of all this, that there is more folly, if not more crime, committed on this, than on all the other six days together.

Thus man, at least *ignorant* man, is unfit to be trusted with any thing under heaven ; since a remarkable appointment for raising the general tenour of moral existence, has with these persons the effect of sinking it. There is interposed, at frequent regular intervals throughout the series of their days, a richer vein, as it were, of time. The improvement of this, in a manner by no means strained to the austerity of exercise prescribed in the Pu-

ritan rules, might diffuse a worth and a grace over all the time between, and assist them against the tendency there may be in its necessary habits and employments to depress the intelligent nature into meanness or debasement. The space which they are passing over is marked, at near intervals, with broad lines of a benignant light, which might spread an appearance of mild lustre over the whole extent as contemplated in retrospect; but how many, in looking back when near the end of their progress, have to perceive the shade rendered darker by the very spaces where that light had been shed from heaven.

The Sundays of those who do not improve them to a good purpose, will infallibly be perverted to a bad one. But it were still a melancholy account, if we could regard them as merely standing for nothing, as a blank in the life of this class of the people. It is a deeply unhappy spectacle and reflection to see a man of perhaps more than seventy sunk in the gross stupidity of an almost total ignorance of all the most momentous subjects, and then to consider, that, since he came to an age of some natural capacity for the exercise of his mind, there have been more than three thousand Sundays. In their long succession they were *his time*. That is to say, he had the property in them which every man has in

duration ; they were present to him, he had them, he spent them. Perhaps some compassionate friend may have been pleading in his behalf,—Alas ! what opportunity, what time, has the poor mortal ever had ? His lot has been to labour hard through the week, throughout almost his whole life. Yes, we answer, but he has had three thousand Sundays ; what would not even the most moderate improvement of so very large a sum of hours have done for him ? But the ill-fated man, (perhaps rejoins the commiserating pleader,) grew up from his childhood in utter ignorance of any use he ought to make of time which his necessary employment would allow him to waste. There, we reply, you strike the mark. Sundays are of no practical value, nor bibles, nor the enlarged knowledge of the age, nor heaven nor earth, to beings brought up in estrangement from all right discipline of their minds. And therefore we are pleading for the schemes and institutions which will not *let* human beings be thus brought up.

In so pleading, we can happily appeal to a conspicuous fact in evidence that the intellectual and religious culture, in the introductory stages of life, tends to secure that the persons so trained shall be, when they are come to ma-

turity, much more sensible than the uncultivated, of the value of means and opportunities, and more disposed to profit by them. Observe the numbers now attending, with a not unbecoming deportment, public worship and instruction, as compared with what the proportion is remembered or recorded to have been half a century since, or any time previous to the great exertions of benevolence to save the children of the inferior classes from preserving the likeness of the minds of their forefathers.

It can be testified also, by persons whose observation has been the longest in the habit of following children and youth from the instruction of the school institutions into mature life, that in a gratifying number of instances, they have been seen permanently retaining too much love of improvement, and too much of the habit of an useful employment of their minds, to sink, in their ordinary daily occupations, into that wretched inanity we were representing; or to consume the free intervals of time in the listlessness, or worthless gabble, or vain sports, of which their neighbours furnished plenty of example and temptation.

These representations have partly included,

what we may yet specify distinctly as one of the unhappy effects of gross ignorance—*a degraded state of domestic society.*

Whatever is of a nature to render individuals uninteresting or offensive to one another, has a specially bad effect among them as members of a family ; because there is in that form of community itself a peculiar tendency to fall below the level of dignified and complacent social life.—A number of persons cannot be placed in a state of social communication, without having a certain sense of claiming from one another a conduct meant and adapted to please. It is expected that a succession of efforts should be made for this purpose, with a willingness of each individual to forego, in little things, his own inclination or convenience. This is all very well when the society is *voluntary*, and the parties can separate when the cost is felt to be greater than the pleasure. Under this advantage of being able soon to separate, even a company of strangers casually assembled will often recognise the claim and conform to the law ; with a certain indistinct sentiment partaking of reciprocal gratitude for the disposition which is so accommodating. But the members of the domestic community also have each this same feeling which demands a mutual effort and self-denial to please, while the

condition of their association is adverse to their *yielding* what they thus respectively claim. Theirs, when once it is formed, is not exactly a voluntary companionship, and it is one of undefinable continuance. The claim therefore seems as if it were to be of a prolongation interminable, while the grateful feeling for the concession is the less for the more compulsory bond of the association. And to be thus required, in a community which must not be dissolved, and in a series that reaches away beyond calculation, to exercise a self-restraint on their wills and humours in order to please one another, goes so hard against the great principle of human feeling—namely each one's preference of pleasing himself—that there is a habitual impulse of reaction against the claim. This shews itself in their deportment, which has the appearance of a practical expression of so many individuals that they *will* maintain each his own freedom. Hence the absence, very commonly, in domestic society, of the attentiveness, the tone of civility, the promptitude of compliance, the habit of little accommodations, voluntary and supernumerary, which are so observable in the intercourse of friends, acquaintance, and often, as we have said, even of strangers.

And then consider, in so close a kind of

community, what near and intimate witnesses they are of all one another's faults, weaknesses, tempers, perversities; of whatever is offensive in manner, or unseemly in habit; of all the irksome, humiliating, or even ludicrous, circumstances and situations. And also, in this close association, the bad moods, the strifes, and resentments, are pressed into immediate lasting corrosive contact with whatever should be the most vital to social happiness. If there be, into the account, the wants, anxieties, and vexations of severe poverty, they will generally aggravate all that is destructive to domestic complacency and decorum.

Now add gross ignorance to all this, and see what the picture will be. How many families we have seen where the parents were only the older and stronger animals than their children, whom they could teach nothing but the methods and tasks of labour. They naturally could not be the mere companions, for alternate play and quarrel, of their children, and were disqualified by mental rudeness to be their respected guardians. There were about them these young and rising forms, containing the inextinguishable principle, which was capable of entering on an endless progression of wisdom, goodness, and happiness; needing numberless suggestions, explanations, ad-

monitions, brief reasonings, and a training to attend to the lessons of written instruction. But nothing of all this from the parental mind. Their case was as hopeless for receiving these necessities of mental life, as the condition, for physical nutriment, of infants attempting to draw it, (we have heard of so affecting and mournful a fact,) from the breast of a dead parent. These unhappy heads of families possessed no resources for engaging youthful attention by mingled instruction and amusement; no descriptions of the most wonderful objects, or narratives of the most memorable events, to set, for superior attraction, against the idle stories of the neighbourhood; no assemblage of admirable examples, from the sacred or other records of human character, to give a beautiful real form to virtue and religion, and promote an aversion to base companionship.

Requirement and prohibition must be a part of the family economy perpetually in operation of course; and in such examples we have seen the family government exercised, or attempted to be exercised, in the roughest, barest shape of will and menace, with no aptitude or means of imparting to injunction and censure a convincing and persuasive quality. Not that the seniors should allow their government to be placed on such a

ground, that, in every thing they enforce or forbid, they may be liable to have their reasons demanded by the children, as an understood condition of their compliance. Far from it; they will sometimes have to require a prescribed conduct for reasons not intelligible, or which it may not be prudent to explain, to those who are to obey. But their authority becomes odious, and as a moral force worse than inefficient, when the natural shrewdness of the children can descry that they really *have* no reasons better than an obstinate or capricious will, and infallibly makes the inference, that there is no obligation to submit but that which is imposed by the necessity involved in a dependent condition. But this must often be the unfortunate case in such families.

Now imagine a week, month, or year, of the intercourse in such a domestic society, the course of talk, the mutual manners, and the progress of mind and character; where there is a sense of drudgery approaching to that of slavery, in the unrelenting necessity of labour; where there is none of the interest of imparting knowledge or receiving it, or of reciprocating knowledge that has been imparted and received; where there is not an acre, if we might express it so, of intellectual space around them, clear of the thick univer-

sal fog of ignorance; where, especially, the luminaries of the spiritual heaven, the attributes of the Almighty, the grand phenomenon of redeeming mediation, the solemn realities of a future state and another world, are totally obscured in that shade; where the conscience and the discriminations of duty are dull and indistinct, from the youngest to the oldest; where there is no genuine respect on the one side, nor affection unmixed with vulgar petulance and harshness, expressed perhaps in wicked imprecations, on the other; where a mutual coarseness of manners and language has the effect, without their being aware of it as a cause, of debasing their worth in one another's esteem, all round; and where, notwithstanding all, they absolutely must pass a great deal of time together, to converse, to display their dispositions toward one another, and exemplify the poverty of the mere primary relations of life, as divested of the accessories which give them dignity, endearment, and conduciveness to the highest advantage of existence.

Home has but little to please the young members of such a family, and a great deal to make them eager to escape out of the house; which is also a welcome riddance to the elder persons, when it is not in neglect or refusal to perform the allotments of labour. So little is

the feeling of a peaceful cordiality created among them by their seeing one another all within the habitation, that, not unfrequently, the passer-by may learn the fact of their collective number being there, from the sound of a low strife of mingled voices, some of them betraying youth replying in anger or contempt to maturity or age. It is wretched to see how early this liberty is boldly taken. As the children perceive nothing in the *minds* of their parents that should awe them into deference, the most important difference left between them is that of physical strength. The children, if of hardy disposition, to which they are perhaps trained in battles with their juvenile rivals, soon shew a certain degree of daring against this superior strength. And as the difference lessens, and by the time it has nearly ceased, what is so natural as that they should assume equality, in manners and in following their own will? But equality assumed where there should be subordination, inevitably involves contempt toward the party against whose claim it is asserted.

The relative condition of such parents as they sink in old age, is most deplorable. And all that has preceded, leads, by a natural course, to that consequence which we have sometimes beheld, with feelings emphatically gloomy,—the almost perfect indiffer-

ence with which the descendants, and a few other near relatives, of a poor old man of this class, could consign him to the grave. A human being was gone out of the world, a being whom they had been near all their lives, some of them sustained in their childhood by his labours, and yet perhaps not one heart, at any moment, felt the sentiment—I have lost——. They never could regard him with respect, and their miserable education had not taught them humanity enough to regard him in his declining days as an object of pity. Some decency of attention was perhaps shewn him, or perhaps not, in his last hours. His being become a dead, instead of a living man, was a burden taken off; and the insensibility and levity, somewhat disturbed and repressed at the sight of his expiring struggle, and of his being lowered into the grave, recovered, by the day after his interment, if not on the very same evening, their accustomed tone, never more to be interrupted by the effect of any remembrance of him. Such a closing scene probably repeated is foreshewn to us, when we look at an ignorant and thoughtless father surrounded by his untaught children. In the silence of thought we thus accost him, The event which will take you finally from among them, perhaps after forty or fifty years of intercourse with them, will leave no more im-

pression on their affections, than the cutting down of a decayed old tree in the neighbourhood of your habitation.

There are instances, of rare occurrence, when such a man becomes, late in life, far too late for his family to have the benefit of the change, a subject of the only influence which could awake him to earnest thoughtfulness and the full sensibility of conscience. When the sun thus breaks out in radiance toward the close of his gloomy day, and when, in the energy of this new life, he puts forth the best efforts of his untaught spirit for a little divine knowledge, to be a lamp to him in entering ere long the shades of death, with what bitter regrets he looks back to the period when a number of human beings, now scattered from him, and here and there pursuing their separate courses in careless ignorance, were growing up under his roof, within his charge, but in utter estrangement from all discipline adapted to ensure a happier sequel. His distressing reflection is often representing to him what they might now have been if they had grown up under such discipline. And gladly would he lay down his life to redeem for them but some inferior share of what the season for imparting to them is gone for ever.

Another thing is to be added, to this representation of the evils attendant on an uncultivated state of the people, namely—that *this mental rudeness puts them decidedly out of communication with the superior and cultivated classes.*

We are assuming (with permission) that a national community should be constituted for the good of all its parts. If so, all the parts have something to do for one another. And will it be done the most effectually by their being detached and alienated from one another, or by their being placed in a state of the most amicable conjunction? But this latter can never be their state while their relations to each other consist of such direct opposites as refinement and barbarism, dignity and gross debasement, intelligence and ignorance; which are the distinctions asserted by the higher classes to exist, in a degree approaching to immensity, between them and the lower. If so little of the sense, the information, the liberalized feeling, and the propriety of deportment, which we are to ascribe to the higher and cultivated portion, goes downward through the lower, it seems impossible but that there must be more of dissocation and repulsion between them, than of congruity and communication. But, for

the good of both it is exceedingly desirable that the upper and inferior orders *should* be on terms of communication and mutual good will, and therefore that there should be a diminution of that rudeness of mind and habits which keeps them in such disconnexion and estrangement.

If it were asked, what communication, at all of a nature to admit of being described by epithets of social and friendly import, we can be supposing by possibility to subsist between classes so different, we may exemplify it by such an instance as we have now and then the pleasure of seeing. Each reader too, of any moderate compass of observation, may probably recollect an example, in the case of some man in humble station, but who has had, (for his condition,) a good education; having been well instructed and exercised in his youth in the elements of useful knowledge; having had good principles diligently inculcated upon him; having subsequently instructed himself, to the best of his very confined means and opportunity, through a habit of reading; and exhibiting in his manners all the decorums of a respectable human being. It has been seen, that such a man has not found in his superiors in station and attainment any disposition to shun him; and has not felt in himself or his situation any reason

why he should seek to shun them. He would occasionally fall into conversation with the wealthy and accomplished proprietor, or the professional man of learning, in the neighbourhood. He maintained toward them a modest deference, but yet with an honest freedom of avowing his opinion, and making his observations on the matters brought in question. His intelligent manner of attending to what they said, his perfect understanding of the language naturally employed by cultivated sense, the considerateness and pertinence of his replies, and the chastened independence, just amounting to the absence of servility and awkward timidity, greatly pleased those persons of superior rank, and induced various friendly and useful attentions, on their part, to him and his family. He and his family thus experienced a direct benefit of superior sense, civility, and good principle, in a humble condition; and were put under a new responsibility to preserve a character for those distinctions.—Now think of the incalculable advantage to society, if any thing approaching to this were the general state of social relation between the lower and the higher orders.

On the contrary, there is no medium of complacent communication between the classes of higher condition and endowment,

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and an ignorant coarse populace. Except on occasion of giving orders or magisterial rebukes, the gentleman will never think of such a thing as converse with the clowns in his vicinity. They, on their part, are desirous to avoid him; excepting when any of them may have a purpose to gain, by arresting his attention, with an ungainly cringe; or when some of those who have no present dependence on him, are disposed to cross his way with a look and strut of rudeness, to shew how little they care for him. The servility, and the impudence, almost equally repress in him all friendly disposition toward a voluntary intercourse with the class. There is thus as complete a dissociation between the two orders, as mutual dislike, added to every imaginable dissimilarity, can create. And this broad, ungracious separation, intercepts all modifying influence that might otherwise have passed, from the intelligence and refinement of the one, upon the barbarism of the other.

But there is, in human nature, a pertinacious disposition to work disadvantages, in one way or other, into privileges. The people, in being thus consigned to a low and alien ground, in relation to the cultivated part of society, are put in possession, as it were, of a territory of their own; where they can give

their disposition freer play, and act out their characters in their own manner; exempt equally from the voluntary and the involuntary influence of the cultivated superiors; that is to say, neither insensibly modified by the attraction of what is the most laudable in them as a pattern, nor swayed through policy to a studied accommodation to their understood opinion and will. This is a great emancipation enjoyed by the inferiors. And however injurious it may be, it is one of which they will not fail to take the full license. For, in all things and situations, it is one of the first objects with human beings, to verify experimentally the presumed extent of their liberty and privilege. In this dissociation, the people are rid of the many salutary restraints and incitements which they would have been made to feel, if on terms of friendly recognition with the respectable part of the community; they have neither honour nor disgrace, from that quarter, to take into their account; and this contributes to extinguish all sense and care of respectability of character,—a sense and care which will never be maintained by any regard to one another's estimates, which they are far enough from holding in reverence: in truth there is a kind of tacit mutual understanding among them, that, for the benefit of them all, they are sys-

tematically to set aside all high notions and nice responsibilities of character and conduct.

The people are thus, by their ignorance and what inseparably attends it, far removed and estranged from the more cultivated part of their fellow countrymen, and consequently from every beneficial influence under which a state of friendly contiguity, if we may so express it, would have placed them. Let us now see what are, in this abandonment to themselves, their growing dispositions toward the superior orders and the existing arrangements of the community; dispositions which are promoted by causes more definite than this estrangement considered merely as the non-existence of benevolent intercourse, but to which it mightily contributes.

Times may have been when the great mass, thus placed out of compact and communication, combined such a quietude with their ignorance, that they had no other than submissive feelings toward these superiors, whose property, almost, they were inured to consider themselves; when no question would ever occur to them why there should be so vast a difference of condition between beings of the same race; when no other proof was required of the just appointment of their lot, however hard it might be, than their being

actually in it ; and when they did not presume, even in thought, to make any inferences from the fact of the immense disproportion of numbers and consequently physical strength between them and their superiors. But the times of this perfect, unquestioning, un murmuring succumbency under the actual allotment, have passed away ; except in such regions as the Russian empire, where they have yet long to continue. In the other principal states of Europe, and especially in our own, the ignorance of the people has nowhere prevented them from acquiring a sense of their strength and importance ; with a certain ill conceived, but stimulant notion, of some change which they think ought to take place in their condition. How, indeed, should it have been possible for them to remain unaware of this strength and importance, while the whole civilized world was shaken with a practical and tremendous controversy between the two grand opposed orders of society, concerning their respective rights ; or that they should not have taken a strong, and, from the rudeness of their mental condition, a fierce interest, in the principle and progress of the strife ? And how should they have failed to hear that, during this controversy, innumerable persons raised from the lowest rank by talent and spirit, had left no place on earth

except in courts (and hardly even there) for the dotage of fancying some innate difference between the classes distinguished in the artificial order of society?

The effect of all this is gone deep into the minds of great numbers who are not excited, in consequence, to any worthy exertion for raising themselves, individually, from their degraded condition, by the earnest application and improvement of their means and faculties. The feeling of many of them seems to be, that they must and will sullenly abide by the ill-starred fate of their order, till some great comprehensive alteration, in their favour, shall absolve them from that bond of hostile sentiment, in which they make common cause against the superior classes; and shall create a state of things in which it shall be worth while for the individual to make an effort to raise himself. We can at best, (they seem to say,) barely maintain, with the utmost difficulty, a miserable life; and you talk to us of cultivation, of discipline, of moral respectability, of efforts to come out from our degraded rank! No, we shall even stay where we are, till it is seen how the question is settled between the people of our sort, and those who will have it that they are of a far worthier kind. There may then, perhaps, be some chance for such as we; and if

not, the less we are disturbed about improvement, knowledge, and all those things, the better, while we are bearing the heavy load a few years, to die like those before us.

We said they are banded in a hostile sentiment. It is true, that among such a degraded populace there is very little kindness, or care for one another's interests. They all know too well what they all are not, to be much attached to one another. But it is infinitely easier for any set of human beings to maintain a community of feeling in hostility to something else, than in benevolence toward one another; for here no sacrifice is required of any one's self-interest. And it is certain, that the subordinate portions of society, in this and several other nations, have come to regard the occupants of the tracts of fertility and sunshine, the possessors of opulence, splendour, and luxury, with a deep, settled, systematic aversion,—to use the most moderate term; with a disposition to contemplate in any other light than that of a calamity, an extensive downfall of the favourites of fortune, when a brooding imagination figures such a thing as possible; and with but very slight hints, from conscience, of the iniquity of the most tumultuary accomplishment of such a catastrophe. In a word, so far from considering their own welfare as identified with the

stability of the existing social order, they consider it as something that would spring from the ruin of that order. The greater number of them have lost that veneration by habit, partaking of the nature of a superstition, which had been protracted downward, though progressively attenuated with the lapse of time, from the feudal ages into the last century. They have quite lost, too, in this disastrous age, that sense of competence and possible wellbeing, which might have harmonized their feelings with a social economy that would have allowed them the enjoyment of such a state, even as the purchase of great industry and care. Whatever the actual economy may have of wisdom in its institutions, and of splendour, and fulness of all good things, in some parts of its apportionment, they feel that what is allotted to most of *them*, in its arrangements, is pressing hardship, galling, unremitting poverty, growing still more severe and hopeless with the progress of time. This bitter experience, which inevitably becomes associated in their thoughts with that frame of society under which they suffer it, will naturally have a far stronger effect on their opinion of that system than all that had ever rendered them acquiescent or reverential toward it. That it has no relief, nor hardly a promise of relief, for their distress, is a cir-

cumstance preponderating in the estimate against all that can be said of its ancient establishment, its theoretical excellences, or the blessings in which it might once have abounded. What were become of the most essential laws of human feeling, if such experience *could* leave those who are undergoing its discipline still faithfully attached to the social order on the strength of its consecration by time, and of the former settled opinions in its favour,—however tenacious the impressions so wrought into habit are admitted to be? And the minds of the people thus thrown loose from the former ties, are not checked and recovered by any substitutional ones formed while those were decaying. They are not retained in a temper of patient endurance and adherence, by the bond of principles which a sedulous and deep instruction alone could have enforced on them. The growth of sound judgment under such instruction, might have made them capable of understanding how a proportion of the evil may have been inevitable, from uncontrollable causes; of perceiving that it could not fail to be aggravated by a disregard of prudence in the proceedings in early life among their own class, and that so far it were unjust to impute it to their superiors or to the order of society; of admitting that national calamities are visi-

tations of divine judgment, of which they were to reflect whether they had not deserved a heavy share; of feeling it to be therefore no impertinent or fanatical admonition that should exhort them to repentance and reformation, as an expedient for the amendment of even their temporal condition; and of clearly comprehending that, at all events, rancour, violence, and disorder, cannot be the way to alleviate any of the evils, but to aggravate them all. But, we repeat it, there are millions in this land, and if we include the neighbouring island politically united to it, many millions, who have received no instruction adequate, in the smallest degree, to counteract the natural effect of the distresses of their condition, or to create a class of moral restraints and mitigations in prevention of a total hostility of feeling against the established order, after the ancient attachments to it have been worn out by the innovations of opinion, and the pressure of continued suffering.

Thus uninstructed to apprehend the considerations adapted to impose a moral restraint, thus unmodified by principles of mitigation, there is a large proportion of human strength and feeling not in vital combination with the social system, but aloof from it, looking at it with "gloomy and malign regard,"

in a state progressive toward a fitness to be impelled against it with a dreadful shock, under the actuating energy of whatever daring powerful spirits might arise, intent on its demolition, and favoured by opportune conjunctures of circumstances. There have not been wanting examples to shew, with what fearful effect this hostility may come into action, in the crisis of the fate of a nation's ancient system ; where this alienated portion of its own people, rushing in, have revenged upon it the neglect of their tuition ; that neglect, which had abandoned them to so utter a "lack of knowledge," that they really understood no better than to expect their own solid advantage in general havoc and disorder. But how bereft of sense the *State* too must be, that would thus *let* a multitude of its people grow up in a condition of mind to believe, that the sovereign expedient for their welfare is to be found in spoliation and destruction ! It might easily have comprehended, what it was reasonable to expect from the matured dispositions and strength of such of its children as it abandoned to be nursed by the wolf.

While this principle of ruin was working on by a steady and natural process, this supposed infatuated State was, it is extremely possible, directing its chief care to maintain

the splendour of a court, or to extort the means for prosecuting some object of vain and wicked ambition, some project of conquest and military glory. And probably nothing could have appeared to many of its privileged persons more idle and ridiculous, nor to others of them more offensive and ill-intentioned, than a remonstrance founded on a warning of such a consequence. The despisers would have been incomparably the greater number; and, "Go" (they would have said) with your mock-tragical fortune-telling, to whoever can believe, too, that one day or other the quadrupeds of our stalls and meadows may be suddenly inspirited by some supernatural possession to turn their strength on us in a mass, or those of our kennels to imitate the dogs of Actæon."

SECTION IV.

Objection, that a material increase of knowledge and intelligence among the people would render them unfit for their station, and discontented with it; would excite them to insubordination and arrogance toward their superiors; and make them the more liable to be seduced by the wild notions and pernicious machinations of declaimers, schemers, and innovators.—Observations in answer.—Special and striking absurdity of this objection in one important particular.—Evidence from matter of fact that the improvement of the popular understanding has not the tendency alleged.—The special regard meant to be had to religious instruction in the education desired for the lower classes, a security against their increased knowledge being perverted into an incitement to insubordination and disorder.—Absurdity of the notion that an improved education of the common people ought to consist of instruction specifically and almost solely religious.—The diminutive quantity of religious as well as other knowledge, to which the people would be limited by some zealous advocates of order and subordination,

utterly inadequate to secure those objects.—But, question what is to be understood by order and subordination.—Increased knowledge and sense in the people certainly not favourable to a credulous confidence and a passive unconditional submission, on their part, toward the presiding classes in the community.—

Advantage, to a wise and upright government, of having intelligent subjects.—Great effect which a general improvement among the people would necessarily have on the manner of their being governed.—The people arrived, in this age, at a state which renders it impracticable to preserve national tranquillity without improving their minds and making some concessions to their claims.—

Folly and probable calamity of an obstinate resolution to maintain subordination in the nations of Europe in the arbitrary and despotic manner of former times.—

Facility and certain success of a better system.

THERE may be persons ready to make a question here, whether it be so certain that giving the people of the lower order more knowledge, and sharpening their faculties, will really tend to the preservation of good order. Would not such improvement elate them, to a most extravagant estimate of their

own worth and importance; and therefore result in insufferable arrogance, both in the individuals and the class? Would they not, on the strength of it, be continually assuming to sit in judgment on the proceedings and claims of their betters, even in the most lofty stations; and demanding their own pretended rights, with a troublesome and turbulent pertinacity? Would they not, since their improvement cannot, from their condition in life, be large and deep, be in just such a half taught state, as would make them exactly fit to be wrought upon by all sorts of crafty schemers, fierce declaimers, empirics, and innovators? Is it not, in short, too probable that, since an increase of mental power is available to bad uses as well as good, the results would greatly preponderate on the side of evil?

It would be curious to observe how objections so plausible in the esteem of those who advance them, would sound if expressed in other terms. Let them be put in the form of such sentences and propositions as the following:—Though understanding is to be men's guide to right conduct, the less of it they possess the more safe are we against their going wrong. The duty of a human being has many branches; there are connected with all of them various general and special considerations, to induce and regulate the

performance ; it is well for these to be defined with all possible clearness ; and it is also well for the great majority of men to be utterly incapable of apprehending them with any such definiteness. It is desirable that the rule, or set of rules, by which the demeanour of the lower orders toward those above them is to be directed, should appear to them *reasonable* as well as distinctly defined ; but let us take the greatest care that their reason shall be in no state of fitness to perceive this rectitude of the rules. It would be a noble thing to have a competent understanding of all that belongs to human interest and duty ; and therefore the next best thing is to be retained very nearly in *ignorance* of all. It would be a vast advantage to proceed a hundred degrees on the scale of knowledge ; but the advantage is no where in the progress ; each of the degrees is in itself worth nothing ; nay, less than nothing ; for, unless a man could attain all, he had better stop at two or one, than advance to four, six, or ten. Truths support one another ; by the conjunction of several each is kept the clearer in the understanding, the more efficient for its appropriate use, and the more adequate to resist the pressure of the surrounding ignorance and delusion ; therefore let there be the greatest caution that we do not give three truths in a

man's understanding the aid of a fourth, or four the aid of a fifth; let the garrison be so diminutive that its successful resistance to the siege must be a miracle.—The reader may, without much danger of excess or misrepresentation, put in as many forms of absurdity as he pleases a notion which goes to the depreciation of the desire and use of truth, of all that has been venerated as wisdom, of the divine revelation of knowledge, and of our rational nature itself.

If it is a rational nature that the lower ranks possess as well as the superior, one should have imagined it must be in the highest degree important that they, as well as their superiors, should habitually make their duty and conduct *a matter of thought*, of intelligent consideration, instead of going through it mechanically, or with little more than a brute accommodation of what they do to a customary and imposed manner of doing it; but this thoughtful manner of acting will never prevail among them, while they are unexercised in that thinking which (generally speaking) men will never acquire but in the exercise of gaining knowledge. It were, again, better, one would think, that they should be capable of seeing some reason and use in gradations and unequal distributions in the community, than be left to regard it as all a matter of

capricious or iniquitous fortune, to their allotment under which there is no reason for submission but a bare necessity. The improvement of understanding by which we are wishing to raise them in this humble allotment, without carrying them from the ground where it is placed, will explain to them the best compensations of their condition, will shew them it is no essential degradation, and point them to the true respectability which may be attained in it. And even if they *should* be a little too much elated with the supposed attainments, (while the flattering possession is new, and not general in their class,) what taste would it be in their superiors not to deem this itself a far better thing than the contented, or more probably insolent and malignant, grossness of a stupid vulgarity? —as some little excess of self-complacency in appearing in a handsome dress is accounted much less disgusting than a careless self-exposure in filth and rags.

As to their being rendered liable by more knowledge to be caught by declaimers, projectors, and agitators, we may confidently ask, whether it is the natural effect of more knowledge and understanding to be less suspicious of cajoling professions, less discerning of what is practicable and impracticable, and more credulous to extravagant doctrines, and

wild theories and schemes. Is it the well instructed and intelligent poor man that believes the demagogue who may assert or insinuate that, if things were ordered right, all men might live in the greatest plenty? Or, if we advert to those of the lower order whom a diminutive freehold may entitle to vote for a member of parliament, is it the well instructed and intelligent man among them that is duped by the candidate's professions of kind solicitude for him and his family, accompanied with smiling equivocal hints that it may be of more advantage than he is aware for a man who has sons to provide for to have *such* a friend? Nor is it among the best instructed and most thinking part of the subordinate class, that we shall find persons capable of believing that a community might, if those who govern it so pleased, be rich and prosperous without a general industry in ordinary employments.

If, again, it is apprehended that a great increase of intelligence among the people would destroy their deference and respectful deportment toward their superiors, the ground of this apprehension should be honestly assigned. If the claim to this respect is definable, and capable of being enforced upon good reasons, it is obvious that improved sense in the people will better appreciate

them. Especially, if the claim is to derive any part of its validity from higher mental qualifications in the claimants, it will so far be incomparably better understood, and if it is valid, far more respected than it is now. By having a measure of knowledge, and of the power of thinking, the people would be enabled to form some notion of what it must be, and what it is worth, to have a vast deal more of these endowments. They would be observant of the indications of this ampler possession in the minds of those above them, and sensible of the significance of these signs, and so would be aware of the great disparity between themselves and these superiors. And since they would value *themselves* very highly on their comparatively small share of these mental advantages, (for this is the very point of the objection against their attaining them,) they would be compelled to estimate by the same scale the persons dignified by so far surpassing a share of this admired wealth. Whereas an ignorant populace can understand nothing at all about the matter; they have no guess at the great disparity, nor impression of its importance; so that with them the cultivated superiors quite lose the weight of this grand difference, and can obtain none of the respect which they may deserve on account of it. The objec-

tion against enlightening the lower classes appears so strikingly absurd when viewed on this side, that it might tempt us to suspect a motive not avowed. It is just the sort of caveat to be uttered by persons aware that themselves, or many of their class, might happen to betray to the sharpened inspection of a more intelligent people, that a higher ground in the allotments of fortune is no pledge for a superior rank of mind. It *were* strange, very strange indeed, if persons combining with superior station a great mental superiority, should be content, while claiming the deference of the subordinate part of the community around them, that this high distinction should go for nothing, and that the required respect should be paid only in reverence of the number of their acres, the size of their houses, the elegance of their domestic arrangements, and perhaps some official capacity which many a notorious blockhead has been held competent to sustain.

We think such considerations as the above, opposed to the objection that any very material cultivation of the minds of the common people would destroy their industry in ordinary employments, their contentment with their station, and their respectful demeanour to their superiors, and would render them arrogant, disorderly, factious, liable to be

caught by wild notions, misled by declaimers and impostors, and in short, all the worse for being able to understand their duty and interest the better, ought to go far toward convicting that objection of great folly,—not to apply any term of stronger imputation.

But we need not have dwelt so long on such arguments, since fortunately we can answer the objection from matter of fact. As far as the very limited experiment has yet gone, it is proved by fact, that giving the people more knowledge and more sense, does not tend to disorder and insubordination; does not excite them to impatience and extravagant claims; does not spoil them for the ordinary business of life, imposed by duty and necessity; does not make them the dupes of knaves; nor prompt them to seek the benefit of the improvement of their faculties in turning knaves themselves. Employers can testify, from all sides, that there is a striking general difference between those bred up in ignorance and rude vulgarity, and those who have been trained through the well ordered schools for the humble classes; a difference exceedingly in favour of the latter, who are found not only more apt at understanding and executing, but more decorous, more respectful, more attentive to orders, more ready to see and acknowledge the propriety of good

regulations, and more disposed to a practical acquiescence in them; far less inclined to ebriety and low company; and more to be depended on in point of honesty. In almost any part of the country, where the experiment has been zealously prosecuted for a moderate number of years, a long resident observer can discern a modification in the character of the neighbourhood; a mitigation of the former brutality of manners, a less frequency of brawls and quarrels, and less tendency to draw together into rude riotous assemblages. There is especially a marked difference on the Sabbath, on which great numbers attend public worship, whose forefathers used on that day to congregate for boisterous and vicious sport on the common, or even within the inclosure vainly consecrated round the church; and who would themselves, in all probability, have followed the same course, but for the tuition which has led them into a better. In many instances, the children have carried from the schools inestimable benefits home to their unhappy families; winning even their depraved thoughtless parents into consideration and concern about their most important interests,—a precious repayment of all the long toils and cares, endured to support them through the period of childhood, and an example of that

rare class of phenomena, in which (as in the instance of the Grecian Daughter) a superlative beauty arises from the inversion of the order of nature.

Even the frightful statements of the increase, in recent years, of active juvenile depravity, especially in the metropolis, include a gratifying testimony in favour of education. The advocates of schools have had the triumph of its being shewn, that it was not from *these* seminaries that such delinquents were to go out, to evince that the improvement of intelligence may be but the greater ability for fraud and mischief. No, it was uniformly found to have been in very different places of resort, that these wretches had been, almost from their infancy, accomplished for crime; and that their training had not taken or needed any assistance from an exercise on literary rudiments, from bibles, catechisms, or religious and moral poetry, or from an attendance on public worship. Indeed, as if Providence had designed that the substantial utility should be accompanied with a special circumstance to confound the cavillers, the children and youth of the schools were found to have been more generally preserved from defection to the league of premature reprobates, than a moral calculator, with the quality of human nature

and the immediate pressure of so much temptation kept in his sight, would have ventured to anticipate, upon a moderate estimate of the influence of instruction.

Experience equally falsifies the notion that knowledge, imparted to the lower orders, beyond what is necessary to the handling of their tools, tends to factious turbulence; to an impatience, (from the instigation of certain wild theories,) under law and regular government in society. The maintainers of which notion should also affirm, that the people of Scotland have long been about the most disaffected, tumultuary, revolutionary rabble in Europe; and that the Cornish miners, at this day so worthily distinguished at once by exercised intellect and religion, are incessantly on the point of insurrection, against their employers or the state. And we shall be just as ready to believe them, if they also assert, that, in those popular irregularities which have too often disturbed, in particular places, the peace of our country, the clamorous bands or crowds, collected for purposes of intimidation or demolition, have consisted chiefly of the better instructed part of the poorer inhabitants;—yes, or that this class furnished one in fifty of the numbers forming such lawless bands; even though many of these more

instructed of the people might be suffering, with their families, the utmost extremity of want, the intense craving of hunger, which, no less than "oppression," may "make a wise man mad." Many of these, in their desolate abodes, with tears of parents and children mingled together, have been committing themselves to their Father in heaven, at the time that the ruder part of the population have been carrying alarm, and sometimes mischief, through the district, and so confirming the faith, we may suppose, of sundry magnates of the neighbourhood, who had vehemently asserted, a few years before, the pernicious tendency of educating the people.

It would be less than what is due to suffering humanity, to leave this topic without observing, that if a numerous division of the community should be sinking under severe, protracted, unmitigated distress, distress on which there appears to them no dawn of hope from ordinary causes, it is not to be held a disparagement to the value of education, if some of those who have enjoyed a measure of that advantage, in common with a greater number who have not, should become feverishly agitated with imaginations of great sudden changes in the social system; and be led to entertain suggestions of irregular violent

expedients for the removal of insupportable evils. It must, in all reason, be acknowledged the last lesson which education could be expected to teach with practical effect, that one part of the community should be willing to resign themselves, as far as they can see, to destruction, that the others may live in sufficiency and tranquillity. Such heroic devotement might not be difficult in the sublime elation of Thermopylæ; but it is a very different matter in a melancholy cottage, and in the midst of famishing children.

After thus referring to matter of fact, for contradiction of the notion, that the mental cultivation of the lower classes might render them less subject to the rules of good order, we have to remark, in further reply, that we are not heard insisting on the advantages of increased knowledge, and mental invigoration, among the people, *unconnected with the inculcation of religion*. Nor is this essential point forgotten or neglected in the actual system of procedure, in the institutions of which we are the advocates. Undoubtedly, their conductors and zealous friends account knowledge valuable absolutely, as being the apprehension of things as they are; a prevention of delusion; and so far a fitness for right voli-

tions. But they consider religion, (besides being itself the primary and infinitely the most important part of knowledge,) as a principle indispensable for securing the full benefit of all the rest. It is desired, and endeavoured, that the understandings of these opening minds may be taken possession of by just and solemn ideas of their relation to the Eternal Almighty Being; that they may be taught to apprehend it as an awful reality, that they are perpetually under his inspection; and as a certainty, that they must at length appear before him in judgment, and find, in another life, the consequences of what they are in spirit and conduct here. It is impressed upon them, that his will is the supreme law; that his declarations are the most momentous truth known on earth; and his favour and condemnation the greatest good and evil. Under an ascendancy of this divine wisdom it is, that it is wished their discipline in any other knowledge may be conducted; so that nothing they learn may be detached from all sensible relation to it, or have a tendency contrary to it. Thus it is sought to be secured, that, as the pupil's mind grows stronger, and multiplies its resources, and he therefore has necessarily more power and means for what is wrong, there may be luminously presented to him, as if celestial

eyes visibly beamed upon him, the most solemn ideas that can enforce what is right.

Such is the discipline meditated, for preparing the subordinate classes to pursue their individual welfare, and act their part as members of the community.—They are to be trained in early life to diligent employment of their faculties, tending to strengthen them, regulate them, and give their possessors the power of effectually using them. They are to be exercised to form clear, correct notions, instead of crude, vague, delusive ones. The subjects of these ideas will be, a very considerable number of the most important facts and principles ; which are to be presented to their understandings with a patient repetition of efforts to fix them there as knowledge that cannot be forgotten. By this measure of actual acquirement, and by the habit formed in so acquiring, they will be qualified for making further attainment in future time, if they are disposed to improve their opportunities. During this progress, and in connexion with many of its exercises, their duty is to be enforced on them, in the various forms in which they will have to make a choice between right and wrong in their conduct toward society. There will be inculcated justice, prudence, inoffensiveness, love of peace, estrangement from the counsels and

leagues of vain and bad men ; hatred of disorder and violence, a sense of the necessity of public institutions to prevent these evils, and respect for them while they honestly answer this end. All this will be taught directly from the Holy Scriptures, from which authority will also be impressed, all the while, the principles of religion. And religion, while its grand reference is to the state of the soul towards God, and to eternal interests, yet takes every principle and rule of morals under the full sanction of its authority ; making the primary obligation and responsibility be towards God, of every thing that is a duty with respect to men. So that, with the subjects of this education, the sense of *propriety* shall be *conscience*, the consideration of how they ought to be regulated in their conduct as a part of the community, shall be the recollection that their Master in heaven dictates the laws of that conduct, and will judicially hold them amenable for every part of it.

And is not a discipline thus addressed to the purpose of fixing religious principles in ascendancy, (as far as that difficult object is within the power of discipline,) and of infusing a salutary tincture of them into whatever else is taught, the right way to bring up citizens faithful to all that deserves fidelity in

the social compact?—But perhaps far less of sacred knowledge than all this pleading assumes to be indispensable to them, will answer the end. For it is but a slender quantity of it that is, in effect, proposed to be imparted to them by those who would give them very little other knowledge. They will talk of giving the people an education specifically religious, a training in which it shall be nearly as essential a matter of care that they should *not* acquire any general knowledge, as that they *should* acquire religious knowledge.

Now, may we presume that by knowledge, or information, is meant a clear understanding of a subject? If so, it is but little religious information that *can* be imparted while that of a more general nature is withheld. The case is so, partly because, in order to a clear conception of the principal things in the doctrine of religion, the mind wants facts, principles, associations of ideas, and modes of applying its thoughts, which are to be acquired from the consideration of various other subjects; and partly because, even though it did *not*, and though it *were* practicable to understand religious truths clearly without the subsidiary ideas, and the disciplined mental habit, acquired in attention to other subjects, *it is flatly contrary to the radical*

disposition of human nature that youthful minds should yield to be confined to this subject. It were supposing a reversal of the natural taste and tendency, to expect them to apply their attention so patiently, so willingly, so long, and with such interest, to this subject, that their very habits of thinking should be formed by the exercise of thinking almost exclusively on this. By thinking on this! we repeat, on this—which is the subject on which they are by their very nature the least of all inclined to think; the subject on which it is the most difficult as well as most important point in education to induce them to think; the subject which, while it is so essential to give it the ascendancy in the instruction of both the lower classes and all others, it requires so much care and address to present in an attractive light; and which it is so desirable to combine with other subjects naturally more engaging, in order to bring it oftener by such associations into the thoughts.

It is curious to see what some persons can believe, or affect to believe, when placed in somewhat of a dilemma. On the one hand, they cannot for a moment endure the idea of any considerable raising of the common people by mental improvement, in the general sense: that were infallible ruin to us all.

But then on the other, it were rather too much to deny, that the said common people are of the very same rational nature as the most elevated divisions of the race ; that their essential worth must be in this spiritual thinking being, which worth is lost to them if that being is sunk and degraded in gross ignorance : and this should seem to imply the necessity of some considerable cultivation. Well then ; let them be trained in their youth to a knowledge almost exclusively religious ; and *there will be no difficulty, it will be an easy matter*, to engage their habitual chief attention to that very thing to which the natural taste of the species is peculiarly averse.

In exposing the absurdity of any scheme of education for the inferior classes, which should propose to make them intelligent about religion and intelligent about nothing else, (except their ordinary employments,) we do not forget the instances now and then met with, of pious poor men who, while very uncultivated in the general sense, evince a remarkable clearness of conception on religious topics, and in the application of these topics to their duties as men and citizens. But “ remarkable ” we involuntarily call these phenomena whenever adverting to them. We naturally use some expression importing a degree of wonder at such a fact. We con-

sider it a striking illustration of the power of *religion itself*, and not of the power of religious instruction. The extreme force with which the vital spirit has seized and actuated his faculties, has in a measure remedied the incapacity he had otherwise been under of forming clear ideas of the subject. Even, however, while acknowledging and admiring this effect of a special influence from heaven, we still find ourselves involuntarily surmising, in such an instance, that the man must also have been superior in natural capacity to the generality of ignorant persons; so much out of the common course of things we account it for a man who knows so little, to know this one thing so well. It is a spontaneous suggestion from the settled conviction received through experience, that it is very unlikely a man ignorant of almost all other things *should* well understand *one* subject, of a nature quite foreign to that of his ordinary occupations.

It is superfluous to observe, that such instances of a very considerable comprehension of religious truth, obtained in spite of what is naturally so powerful to render it unattainable, cannot be taken as a ground of calculation when we are devising schemes which can only work according to natural laws and with ordinary powers. The disci-

pline for improving the people is to be adjusted to operate in the manner in which we see it most *naturally* tending to its good effect. Those who design and apply it will rejoice that sometimes such things are done as it cannot do ; but they will consider in what manner of applying its operation it is rational, according to the common order of things, to expect it to do the most. And if, in attentively studying this, there are any who come to ascertain, that the right expedient is a bare inculcation of religious instruction, disconnected, on system, from the illustrative aid of other knowledge, divested of the modification and attraction of associated ideas derived from subjects less uncongenial with the natural feelings,—they really may take the comfort of having ascertained one thing more, which may nearly exempt them from the toil of applying even that expedient : they have discovered that human nature has become at last so mightily changed, that it may be left to work itself right very soon, without any further trouble of theirs.

It was as a chief preservative of due order and subordination in society, and particularly as a security against any ruinous effects on these from the supposed improvement of popular education, that religious instruction

was so pointedly dwelt on by us, as standing prominent in any scheme that we should form of such an education. And in this character of a preserver of good order, it has often been insisted on by persons who avowed their contempt or abhorrence of every idea of imparting knowledge to the people in a more enlarged sense. We have heard it so insisted on by members of the most learned institutions, at the same moment in which they expressed more than a doubt of the prudence of enabling the common people to read, literally to *read* the Bible. But assuredly the good order of a populace left in the stupid ignorance to which some of these good friends of theirs would have doomed them, cannot be preserved by any such feeble infusion of religious thought as these same good friends would instil into their mental grossness. That order must be preserved by some far stronger cause. And if it actually *has* been maintained, in nearly the required degree, with little more of religious knowledge in the majority of the mass than such a wretched scantling, a great deal of hypocritical canting about some sense of religion in the inferior classes being necessary to the safety of the state, might have been spared.

But all this while, we are forgetting to

inquire how much is to be understood as included in that good order, that deference and subordination, which it has been apprehended that the possession of more mind and knowledge, by the people, might disturb or destroy. May not the notion of it, as entertained by some persons, be rather an image of the polity of an age long past, or of that which remains unaltered as if it were a part of eternal nature in the dominions of the East, than a model for the conformation of society here in the present times? Is it required that there should be a sentiment of obsequiousness in the people affecting them in a manner like the instinct by which a lower order of animals is in awe of a higher, by which the common tribe of beasts would shrink at the sight of lions? Or is the deference expected to be paid, not upon any understanding of reciprocal advantage, but absolutely and unconditionally, as to a claim founded in abstract or divine right? Is it to be held a criminal presumption in the people, to think of examining their relations to the community any further than the obligation of being industrious in the employments to which it assigns them, and of being dutiful to its higher orders? Are they to entertain no question respecting the right adjustment of their condition in the arrangements of the great social

body? Are they forbidden ever to admit a single doubt of its being quite a matter of course, that every thing which could be done for the interests of their class, consistently with the welfare of the whole, is done; or, therefore, to pretend to any such right as that of representing, complaining, and remonstrating?

A subordination founded in such principles, and required to such a degree, it is true enough that the communication of knowledge is not the way to perpetuate. For the first use, which men will infallibly make of an enlargement of their faculties and ideas, will be, to take a larger view of their interests; and they may happen, as soon as they do so, to think they discover that it was quite time; and the longer they do so, to retain still less and less of implicit faith, that those interests will be done justice to without their own vigilance and intervention. An educated people must be very slow indeed in the application of what they learn, if they do not soon grow out of all belief in the *necessary* wisdom and rectitude of any order of human creatures whatever. They will see how unreasonable it were to expect, that any sort of men will fail in fidelity to the great natural principle, of making their own advantage the first object; and therefore they will not be apt

to listen, with the gravity which in other times and regions may have been shewn in listening, to injunctions of gratitude for the willingness evinced by the higher orders, to take on them the trouble of watching and guarding the people's welfare, by keeping them under due control.

But neither will it *necessarily* be in the spirit of hostility, in the worst sense of the word, that a more instructed people will thus shew a diminished credulity of reverence toward the predominant ranks in the social economy ; and will keep in habitual exercise upon them a somewhat suspicious observation, and a judicial estimate ; with an honest freedom in sometimes avowing disapprobation, and strongly asserting any right which is believed to be endangered. This will only be expressing that, since all classes naturally consult, by preference, their own interests, it is plainly unfit, that one portion of the community should be trusted with an unlimited discretion in ordering what affects the welfare of the others ; and that, in all prudence, the people must withhold an entire affiance, and unconditional, unexamining acquiescence ; “ except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh,” would come to harmonize, and then administer, interests which are placed so unappeasably at strife :—for as to what is so

often asserted of those interests being in reality the same, it is evidently impossible for either of the two parties, even if believing so, to concede to the other the exclusive adjustment of the practical mode of identification.

But only let the utmost that is possible be done, to train the people, from their early years, to a sound use of their reason, under a discipline for imparting a valuable portion of knowledge and assiduously inculcating the principles of social duty and of religion; and then something may be said, to good purpose, to their understanding and conscience, while they are maintaining the inevitable competition of claims with their superiors. They will then be capable of seeing put in a fair balance, many things which headlong ignorance would have taken all one way. They will be able to appreciate many explanations, alleged causes of delay, statements of difficulty between opposing reasons; which would be thrown away on an ignorant populace. And it would be an inducement to their making a real exertion of the understanding, that they thus found themselves so formally put upon their responsibility for its exercise,—that they were summoned to a rational discussion, instead of being addressed in the style of Pharaoh

to the Israelites. The strife of interests would thus come to be carried on with less fierceness and malice, in the spirit and manner, on the part of the people. And the ground itself of the contention, the substance of the matters in contest, would be gradually diminished—by the concessions of the higher classes to the claims of the lower: for there is no affecting to dissemble, that a great mental and moral improvement of the people would necessitate, though there were not a single movement of rude force in the case, important concessions to them, on the part of the superior orders. A people advanced to such a state, would make its moral power felt in a thousand ways, and every moment. This general augmentation of sense and right principle would send forth, against all arrangements and inveterate or more modern usages, of the nature of invidious exclusion, arbitrary repression, and the debasement of great public interests into a detestable private traffic, an energy, which could no more be resisted than the power of the sun, when he advances in the spring to annihilate the relics and vestiges of the winter. This plastic influence would modify the institutions of the national community, to a state adapted to secure all the popular rights; and to convey the genuine, collective opinion, to bear di-

rectly on the counsel and transaction of national concerns. That opinion would have a weight which could not be set at defiance, and an unpervertible fidelity of manifestation, which would leave no possibility of affecting to take any other as the expression of the popular mind.

That such effects would be inseparable from a great general advancement of the people in knowledge and corrected character, must be freely acknowledged to those who cannot consent to their receiving the utmost practicable cultivation. And is it *because* these would be the consequences, that those disapprovers would deprecate such a cultivation? Then let them say, what it is that *they* would expect from an opposite system. *What* is it, that they are seriously promising themselves, from the auspicious influence of all the ignorance, that can henceforward be retained among the people of this part of the world? It is true, the remaining ignorance is so great, that they cannot well go to excess in the estimate of its *general* amount; but how can they fail to perceive the importance of those *particulars* in which its dominion has been broken up? There is indeed a hemisphere of "gross darkness over the people;" it may be possible to withhold from it long the illumination of the sun; but in the

mean time it has been rent by portentous lights and flashes, which have excited a thought and agitation not to be stilled by the continuance of the gloom. There have come in on the popular mind some ideas, which the wisest of those who dread or hate their effect there, look around in vain for the means of expelling. And these glimpses of partial intelligence, these lights of dubious and possibly destructive direction amidst the night, will continue to prompt and lead that mind, with a hazard which can cease only with the opening upon it of the true daylight of knowledge. If the ideas concerning popular rights have come into the minds of the people before the proper time, that is to say, before they were prepared to judge rationally of those rights, and to apprehend clearly the duties inseparable from them as a condition of their enjoyment, the calamitous consequences to the higher classes, as seen in the recent history of Europe, may be regarded as a righteous judgment of heaven upon them, for having suffered it to be *possible* for these new ideas of liberty and rights to come upon the people in a state so unprepared. What were all their commanding authorities of government, their splendid ecclesiastical establishments, their great personal wealth and influence,—all their lofty powers and

distinctions which even their basest sycophants, sacerdotal or poetical, in their most fulsome adulations, told them they were not intrusted with for their own gratification,—what were all these for, if the great body of the communities over which they presided, were to be retained in a state in which they could not be touched by a few bold speculations in favour of popular rights, without exploding as with infernal fire? How appropriate a retribution of Sovereign Justice, that those who were wickedly the cause, should be the victims of the effect!

Where such a consequence has not followed, but where, nevertheless, these ideas of popular rights have come into the minds of the people very much in precedence and disproportion to the general cultivation of their intelligence and moral sense, it is most important that all diligence should be given to bring up these neglected improvements to stand in rank with these too forward ideas.

Whether this shall be done or not, these notions and feelings concerning popular rights are not things come into life without an instinct of what they have to do. The disapprovers of schemes for throwing the greatest practicable measure of sound corrective knowledge into the minds of the

multitude, may take instruction or may decline it from seeing that, both in this country and other great states of Europe, there has gone forth among the mass of the people a spirit of revolt from the obligation, which would retain their reverence to institutions on the strength simply of their being established or being ancient; a spirit that re-acts, with deep and settled antipathy, against some of the arrangements and claims of the order into which the national community has been disposed by institutions and the course of events; a spirit which regards some of the appointments and requirements of that order, as little better than adaptations of the system to the will and gratification of the more fortunate divisions of the species. And it has shewn itself in a very different character from that of a mere pining despondency, or the impotent resentment excited sometimes in timidity itself by severe grievance, but quelled by alarm at its own rashness. The element and the temperament of its nature, and the force of its action, have been displayed in the tremendous concussions attending its conflict with the power arrayed in behalf of the old order of things to crush it. And is this spirit crushed? Is it subdued? Is it in the least degree reduced?—reduced,

we mean, in its internal power, as a combination of the most absolute opinion with the impulse of some of the strongest passions.

Is it, we repeat, expressed? There may have been persons who could not, "good easy men," conceive a possibility of its surviving the fiery storm of the whole resources of the world converted into the materials of war, and followed by the mightiest leagues and the most systematic legislation, all aimed its destruction; surviving to come forth with unabated vigour at the opportune junctures in the future progress of events; like some great serpent, meeting and glaring upon the sight again, with his appalling glance and uninjured length of volume, after a storm of missiles had sent him to his retreat, and been poured in there with destructive intention after him. The old approved expedients against unreasonable discontents, and refractory tempers, and local movements of hostility excited by some worthless competitor for power, had been applied on the grand scale; and henceforward all would be still. It was not given to these dull or spell-bound understandings to apprehend, that the spirit to be repressed might be of a nature impassive to these expedients, possibly of a subsistence to be confirmed by their application. Repressed! What is it that is mani-

festing itself in the most remarkable events in the old, and what has been called the new world, at the present time? And what are the measures of several of the great state authorities of Europe, whether adopted coolly on system, or in a fitful mood between rashness and dismay; what are, especially, the meetings, conferences, and eager military preparations, of the mightiest despots of the globe, assembled at this very hour against a small and unoffending nation,*—what are these but a confession or proclamation, that the spirit which the most enormous exertions had been made to overwhelm, has preserved all its life and energy; like those agents whom Milton describes as having mountains thrown on them in vain? Every year renders it but more evident, that the principle in action is something far different from a superficial transient irritation; that it has gone the whole depth of the mind; has possessed itself of the very judgment and conscience of an innumerable legion, extending continually to a still greater number. No doubt is permitted to remain, whether the real current of

* The meeting of imperial and royal personages at Troppau and Laybach, for the detestable purpose of crushing the newly acquired liberty of the kingdom of Naples.—January, 1821.

the popular feeling has changed its direction,—to be recovered to its ancient course, when some great branch of the Mississippi shall resume that channel into the sea, which it has abandoned in opening for itself a new one. For when once the great mass, of the lower and larger division of the community, shall have become filled with an absolute, and almost unanimous conviction, that they, the grand physical agency of that community ; that they, the operators, the producers, the preparers, of almost all its most essentially wants ; that they, the part, therefore, of the social assemblage so obviously the most essential to its existence, and on which all the rest must depend ;—that they have their condition in the great social arrangement so disposed as not to acknowledge this their importance, as not to secure an adequate reward of these their services ;—we say, when this shall have become the feeling and the conviction, to the very centre of the mind, in the millions of Europe, we would put it as a question to the judgment of a sober man, whether and how this state of feeling can be reversed or neutralized, while those circumstances of the economy which have caused it are remaining. But if it cannot, we put it to his judgment at the next step, what the con-

sequence must ultimately be. Will he pretend not to foresee any change, of the smallest importance, in an order of things obnoxious to so vast a combination of wills and agents? This will indeed be pretended by many persons eminently wise in their own conceit. There has not been one of the great alterations effected by the popular spirit within the last forty years, that was not preceded by avowals of contemptuous incredulity, on the part of the applauders of things as they were, toward those who calculated on the effects of that spirit. These avowals would indeed be sometimes accompanied, rather inconsistently, with expressions of horror at the undeniable excitement and progress of popular feeling; but the scorn of all serious and monitory predictions of its result was at all events to be kept up,—in whatever proportions a time-serving interest and an honest fatuity might share in dictating this elated and contemptuous style. Should the latter of these ingredients at present predominate in the temper which throws off the fume of this high style, there will be little capacity for explaining the means, which are assumed to be efficacious against such consequences as we should anticipate from the progress of disapprobation and aversion in the people; unless

indeed the security mainly relied on is just that plain simple expedient—force, for all nations on earth downright force. Is it plainly this that is meant, when persons disinclined to speak out give us a circumlocution of delicate phrases, “the conservative energies of the public institutions,” perhaps, and others of similar cast?—which fine phrases suggest to one’s imagination the ornamented fashion of the handle and sheath of the scimitar, which is not the less keen, nor the less ready to be drawn, for all this finery ; and which may not even remain peaceful till there is a real aggression to excuse its vengeance.

The economy of states *shall* not be modified in favour of the great body of those who constitute them.—And are, then, the higher and privileged portions of the national communities to have, henceforward, just this one grand object of their existence, this chief employment for their knowledge, means, and power, namely, to keep down the lower orders of their fellow-citizens by stress of coercion and punishment? Are they resolved and prepared for a rancorous, interminable, hostility in prosecution of such a benign purpose ; with a continual exhaustion upon it of the resources which might be applied to

diminish that wretchedness of the people, which is the grand inflamer of those principles that have caused an earthquake under the foundations of the old social systems? But "interminable" is no proper epithet to be applied to such a course. This policy of a bare uncompromising rigour, exerted to keep the people just where they are, in preference to a plan formed upon a calculation of a material change, and adapted to prepare them for it—how long could it be successful,—not to ask what would be the value or the glory of that success? With the light of recent history to aid the prognostication, by what superstitious mode of estimating the self-preserving and self-avenging competence of any artificial form of social order, can we believe in its power to throw back the general opinions, determinations, and efforts, of the mass of mankind in endless recoil on themselves? That must be a very firm structure, must be of gigantic mass or most excellent basis and conformation, against which the ocean shall unremittingly wear and foam in vain. And it does not appear what there can be of such impregnable consistence in any particular construction of the social economy which is, by the supposition, resolved to be maintained in sovereign immutability, in per-

manent frustration of the persevering, ever-growing, aim and impulse of the great majority, pressing on to achieve important innovations in their favour ; innovations in those systems of institution and usage, under which they will never cease to think they have had far less happiness heretofore than they ought to have had. We cannot see how this impulse can be so repelled or diverted that it shall not prevail at length, to the effect of either bearing down, or wearing away, a portion of the order of things which the ascendant classes in every part of Europe would have fondly wished to maintain in perpetuity, without one particle of surrender.

But though they cannot preserve its entireness, the manner in which it shall yield to modification is in a great measure at their command. And here is the important point on which all these observations are meant to bear. If a movement has really begun in the general popular mind of the nations, and if the principle of it is growing and insuppressible, so that it must in one manner or another ultimately prevail, what will the state be of any national community where it shall be an unenlightened, half barbarous, people that so prevails ?—a people no better informed, perhaps, than to believe that all the hardship and

distress endured by themselves and their forefathers were wrongs, which they suffered from the higher orders ; than to ascribe to bad government, and the rapacity and selfishness of the rich, the very evils caused by inclement seasons ; and than to assume it as beyond question, that the whole accumulation of their resentments, brought out into action at last, is only justice demanding and effecting a retribution.

In such an event, what would not the superior orders be glad to give and forego, in compromise with principles, tempers, and demands, which they will know they should never have had to encounter, to the end of time, if, instead of spending their vast advantages on merely their own state and indulgence, they had applied them in a mode of operation and influence tending to improve, in every way, the situation and character of the people? It is true, that such a wild triumph of overpowering violence would necessarily be short. A blind turbulent monster of popular power never can for a long time maintain the domination of a political community. It would rage and riot itself out of breath and strength, succumb under some strong coercion of its own creating, and lie subject and stupified, till its spirit should be

recovered and incensed for new commotion. But this impossibility of a very prolonged reign of confusion, would be little consolation for the classes against whose privileged condition the first tremendous eruption should have driven. It would not much cheer a man who should see his abode carried away, and his fields and plantations devastated, to tell him that what had inflicted this ruin was but a transient mountain torrent. A short prevalence of the overturning force would have sufficed, for the subversion of the proudest, longest established state of privilege; and most improbable would it be, that those who lost it in the tumult, would find the new authority, which would arise as that tumult subsided, either able or disposed to restore it. They might perhaps, (on a favourable supposition,) survive in personal safety, but in humiliated fortunes, to ruminate on their manner of occupying their former elevated situation, and of employing its ample means of power, a due share of which, exerted for the improvement of the general condition, both intellectual and civil, with an accompanying liberal yet very gradual concession of privileges to the people, would have prevented the catastrophe.

Let us urge then, that a zealous endeavour to render it absolutely impossible that, in any

A, humanly speaking

change whatever, the destinies of a nation should fall under the power of an ignorant infuriated multitude, may take place of the presumption that there *is* no great change to be ever effected by the progressive and conscious importance of the people ; a presumption than which nothing can appear more like infatuation, when we look at the recent scenes and present temperament of the moral world. Educate the people ; train them to sound sense ; civilize them ; promote the reformation of their morals ; inculcate the principles of religion, simply and solemnly *as* religion, as a thing directly of divine dictation, and not as if half of its authority were in virtue of human institutions ; let the higher orders generally make it perfectly evident to the multitude that they are desirous to improve them, raise them, and promote their happiness ; and then *whatever* the demands of the people as a body, thus improving in understanding and the sense of justice, shall come to be, and *whatever* modification their preponderance may ultimately enforce on the great social arrangements, it will be infallibly certain that there never *can* be a love of disorder, an insolent anarchy, a prevailing spirit of revenge and devastation. Such a conduct of the ascendant ranks would, in this

nation at least, secure that, as long as the world lasts, there never would be any formidable commotion, or violent sudden changes. All those modifications of the national economy which an improving people would aspire and would deserve to obtain, would be gradually accomplished, in a manner by which no party would be injured, and all would be the happier.

SECTION V.

Extreme poverty of Religious Knowledge among the uneducated people: Their notions respecting God, Providence, Jesus Christ, the invisible world.—Fatal effect of their want of mental discipline as causing an inaptitude to receive religious information.—Exemplifications,—in a supposed experiment of religious instruction in a friendly visit to a numerous uneducated family; in the stupidity and thoughtlessness often betrayed in attendance on public religious services; in the impossibility of imparting religious truths, with any degree of clearness, to ignorant persons when alarmed into some serious concern by sickness; in the insensibility and invincible delusion sometimes retained in the near approach to death.—Rare instances of the admirable efficacy of religion to animate and enlarge the faculties, even in the old age of an ignorant man.—Excuses for the intellectual inaptitude and perversion of uncultivated religious minds.—Animadversions on religious teachers.

THE most serious form of the evil caused by a want of mental improvement, is that which is exposed to us in its consequences with

respect to the most important concern of all, Religion. This has been briefly adverted to in a former part of these descriptive observations. But the subject seems to merit a more amplified illustration, and may be of sufficient interest to excuse some appearance of repetition. The special view in which we wish to place it, is that of *the inaptitude of unexercised minds for receiving religious instruction*.—But first, a slight estimate may be attempted of the actual state of religious notions among our uneducated population.

Some notion of such a concern, something different in their consciousness from the absolute negation of the idea, something that faintly responds to the terms in which a person conversing with them would express the idea, in the way of questioning them on the subject, may be presumed to exist in the minds of all who are advanced a considerable way into youth, or come to mature age, in a country where all are familiar with several of the principal terms of theology, and have the monitory spectacle of edifices for religious use, on spots appointed also for the interment of the dead. If this sort of measured caution in the assumption should seem bordering on the ridiculous, we would recommend those who would smile at it to make some little experiments. It would not be difficult to

insinuate themselves into the company of some of the innumerable rustics who have grown up destitute of every thing worth calling education ; or of the equally ill-fated beings in the alleys, precincts, and lower employments, of towns. They might manage to avoid an abruptness and judicial formality, which would prevent the readiness to be communicative, while they contrived to give the effect, without the express form, of questioning, to expressions meant to draw out the thoughts of some of these persons respecting God, Jesus Christ, the human soul, the invisible world. And the answers would often put them to a stand to conceive, under what suspension of the laws of rational existence the utterers could have been passing so many years in the world. These answers might dispel, as by a sudden shock, the easy complacent assurance, (were it possible the questioners had been so unknowing as to cherish such a feeling,) that almost all the people *must*, in one way or another, have become decently apprised of a few first principles of religion ; that this *could* not have failed to be the case in what was expressly constituted as a great christian community, acknowledging a responsibility that none of its members should be left destitute of the most essential requisite to their wellbeing. This agreeable assur-

ance would vanish, like a dream interrupted, at the spectacle thus presented, of persons very nearly as devoid of those first principles, after living eighteen, thirty, forty, or twice forty years, under the superintendence of that community, as if they had been the aboriginal rovers of the American forests, or natives of unvisited coral-built spots in the ocean.

If these examiners were to prosecute the investigation widely, and with an effect on their sentiments correspondent to the enlarging disclosure of facts, they would find themselves fallen into a very altered estimate of this our christian tract of the earth. A fancied sunshine, spread over it before, would have faded away. From appearing to them, according to an accustomed notion, peculiarly auspicious, as if almost by some virtue of its climate, to the growth of religious intelligence in the minds of the people, it might come to be regarded as favourable to the development of *all things rather than that*. Plants and trees, the diversity of animal forms and powers, the human frame, the features enlarging or enlarged to manhood in the persons looked upon while making the answers to the supposed examiner, with their passions also, and prevailing dispositions—see how all things can unfold themselves in our territory,

and grow and enlarge to their completeness,—excepting the ideas of the human soul relating to the Almighty, and to the grand purpose of its own existence!

The supposed answers would, in many instances, betray, that any thought of God at all was of very rare occurrence, the idea having never become strongly associated with any thing beheld in the whole creation. We should think it probable, as we have said before, that with many, while in health, weeks often pass away without this idea being once so presented as to fix the mind in attention to it for one moment of time. If they could be set to any such task as that of retracing, at the end of the day or week, the course of their thoughts, to recollect what particulars in the series the mind had, so to speak, the most intently looked at, it would be nearly as seldom that *this* idea would recur as having so arrested them, as it would be that they would have to recollect the sight of a splendid meteor. Yet during that space of time, their thoughts, such as they were, shall have run through thousands of changes; and even the name of God may have been pronounced by them a multitude of times, in jocularity or imprecation. This is a state very near absolute atheism.

But that idea of God which has, by some

means, found its way into their understandings, to abide there so nearly in silence and oblivion,—what is it, when some direct call does really evoke it? It is generally a gross approximation of the conception of the Infinite Being to the likeness of man. If what they have heard of his being a Spirit, has indeed some little effect in prevention of the total debasement of the idea, it prevents it rather by confusion than by magnificence. It may somewhat restrain and baffle the tendency of the imagination to a direct degrading definition; but it does so by a dissolution of the idea as into a wide attenuated cloud. And ever and anon, this cloudy diffusion is again drawing in, and shaping itself, toward an image, enormous perhaps, and spectral, and portentous across the firmament, but in some strong analogy to the human mode of personality.

The divine attribute which is apprehended by them with most of an impression of reality, is a certain vastness of power. But, through the grossness of their intellectual atmosphere, this appears to them in the character of something prodigiously huge, rather than sublimely glorious.—As considered in his quality of moral judicial Governor, God is regarded by some of them as more disposed, than there is any reasonable cause, to be displeased with

what is done in this world. But the far greater number have no prevailing sentiment that he takes any very vigilant account or concern.* And even those who entertain the more ungracious apprehension, have it not in sufficient force to make them, once in whole months, deliberately think it worth while to care what he may disapprove.

The notions that should answer to the doctrine of a Providence, are a confusion of some crude idea of a divine superintendence, with stronger fancies and impressions of luck and chance ; a confusion of them not unaptly exemplified in a grave and well-meaning sentiment heard from a man in a temporal condition to be envied by many of his neighbours, " Providence must take its chance." And these are still further, and most uncouthly, confounded by the admixture of the ancient heathen notion of fate, reduced from its philosophy to its dregs. In many instances,

* Some have no very distinct impression the one way or the other. Not very long since, a friend of the writer, in one of the midland counties, fell into talk, on a Sunday, with a man who had been in some very plain violation of the consecrated character of the day. He seriously animadverted on this, adding, Don't you think God will be displeased at and punish such conduct? or words to that effect. The man, after a moment's consideration, answered, with unaffected cool simplicity, exactly thus : " That's according as how a takes it."

however, this last obtains such a predominance, as to lessen the confusion, and withal, to preclude, in a great measure, the sense of accountableness. In neither of these rude states of the understanding, (that which confounds Providence and chance, and that which sinks in dull acquiescence to something obscurely imagined like fate,) is there any serious admission, at least during the enjoyment of health, of the duty or advantage of prayer.

The supposed examiner may endeavour to possess himself of the notions concerning the Redeemer of the world. They would be found, in numerous instances, amounting literally to no more than, that Jesus Christ was a worthy kind of man, (the word has actually been "gentleman," in more than one instance that we have heard from unquestionable testimony,) who once, somewhere, (these national christians had never, in their lives thought of inquiring when or where,) did a great deal of good, and was very ill used by bad people. The people now, they think, bad as they may be, would not do so in the like case. Some of these persons may occasionally have been at church; and are just aware that his name often recurs in its services; they never considered why; but they have a vague impression of its repetition

having some kind of virtue, perhaps rather in the nature of a spell.—The names of the four evangelists are by some held literally and technically available for such an use.

A few steps withdrawn from this thickest of the mental fog, there are many who are not entirely uninformed of something having been usually affirmed, by religious formularies and teachers, of Jesus Christ's being more than a man, and of his having done something of great importance toward preventing our being punished for our sins. This combination of a majestic superiority to the human nature, with a subsistence yet confessedly human, just passes their minds like a shape formed of a shadow, as one of the unaccountable things that may be as it is said, for what they know, but which they need not trouble themselves to think about. As to the great things said to be done by him, to save men from being punished, they see indeed no necessity for such an expedient, but if it is so, very right, and so much the better; for between that circumstance in our favour, and God's being too good, after all that is said of his holiness and wrath, to be severe on such poor creatures as men, we must have a good chance of coming off safely at last. But multitudes of the miserably poor, however wicked, have a settled assurance of this coming off well at

last, independently of any thing effected for men by the Mediator: they shall be exempted, they believe, from any future suffering in consideration of their having suffered so much here. There is nothing, in the scanty creed of great numbers, more firmly held than this.

It is true; they believe that the most atrociously wicked must go to a state of punishment after death. They consider murderers, especially, as under this doom. But the offences so adjudged, according to any settled estimate they have of the demerit of bad actions, are comprised in a very short catalogue. At least it is short if we could take it exclusively of the additions made to it by the resentments of individuals. For each one is apt to make his own particular addition to it, of some offence which he would never have accounted so heinous, but that it has happened to be committed against *him*. We can recollect the exultation of sincere faith, seen mingling with the anger, of an offended man, while *predicting*, as well as imprecating, this retribution of some injury he had suffered; a real injury, indeed, in some degree; yet of a kind which he would have held in small account had he only seen it done to another person.—As to the nature of that future punishment, the ideas of these neglected minds

go scarcely at all beyond the images of corporal anguish, conveyed by the well known metaphors. They have no impressive idea of the pain of remorse, and scarcely the faintest conception of an infelicity inflicted by the conscious loss of the Divine favour.

It is most striking to observe how wholly negative is the state of their understanding in regard to the future happiness, which it should seem they expect to obtain, as the necessary alternative of the evil they so easily assure themselves of escaping. The ordinary images employed in religious discourse to represent it, (if they should ever have heard enough of such discourse to be acquainted with those images,) are very little congenial to their notions of pleasure. And no more would the abstracted and elevated ideas be so, if they had intellect and thought enough to reach so far. Here the reflection again returns, what an inexpressible poverty of mind there is, when the people have no longer a mythology, and yet have not obtained in its place any knowledge of the true religion. The martial vagrants of Scandinavia glowed with the vivid anticipations of Valhalla; the savages of the western continent had their animating visions of the "land of souls;" the modern christian barbarians of England, who also expect to live after death, do not know

what they mean by their phrase of "going to heaven."

Most of this class of persons think very little in any way whatever of the invisible spiritual economy. And many of them wish to think, if possible, still less. For they are liable to be occasionally affected with dark hints and hauntings of an unseen world. But it is very remarkable, how little these may contribute to enforce the salutary impressions of religion. For instance, a man subject to the terror of apparitions shall not therefore be in the smallest degree the less profane, except just at the time that this terror is upon him. A number of persons, not one of whom durst walk, alone, at midnight, round a lonely church, encompassed with graves to which has perhaps lately been added that of a notoriously wicked man, will nevertheless, on a fine Sunday morning, form a row of rude idlers, standing in the road to this very church, to vent their jokes on the persons going thither to attend the offices of religion, and on those offices themselves.

Such, as regarding religion, is the state out of which it is desired to redeem a multitude of the people of this land. Or rather we should say, it is sought to save a multitude from being consigned to it. For consider, in the next place, (what we wished especially to

d point at, in this most important article in the enumeration of the evils of ignorance,) consider what a fatal inaptitude for receiving the truths of religion, is created by the neglect of training minds to the exercise of their faculties, and the acquirement of elementary information.

How inevitably it must be so, from the nature of the case!—There is a sublime economy of invisible realities. There is the Supreme Existence, an infinite and eternal Spirit. There are spiritual existences, that have kindled into brightness and power, from nothing, at his creating will. There is an universal government, omnipotent, all-wise, and righteous, of that Supreme Being, over the creation. There is the immense tribe of human spirits, in a most peculiar and a tremendous predicament, held under eternal obligation of conformity to a law which emanates from the holiness of that Being, but perverted to a state of disconformity to it, and opposition to him. Next, there is a signal anomaly of moral government, the constitution of a new state of relation between the Supreme Governor and this alienated race, through a Mediator, who makes an atonement for human iniquity, and stands representative before Almighty Justice, for those who in grateful accordance to the mysterious appointment

consign themselves to his charge. There are the several doctrines declaratory of this new constitution through all its parts. There is the view of religion in its operative character, or the doctrine of the application of its truths and precepts by a divine agency to transform the mind and rectify the life. And this great combination of things is extending its importance and its consequences infinitely far beyond the sensible horizon of our present state to an invisible world, to which the spirits of men proceed at death for judgment and retribution, and with the prospect of living for ever.

Look at this scene of faith, so distinct, and stretching to such remoteness, from the field of ordinary things ; consisting of elements of which it is for intellect alone to apprehend the reality ; of objects with which intellect alone can hold converse. Look at this scene ; and then consider, what manner of beings you are calling upon to enter into it by contemplation. Beings who have never learned to think at all. Beings who have hardly ever once, in their whole lives, made a real effort to direct and concentrate the action of their faculties on any thing abstracted from the objects palpable to the senses ; whose entire attention has been engrossed, from their infancy, with the common business, the low

amusements and gratifications, the idle talk, the local occurrences, which formed the whole compass of the occupation, and practically acknowledged interests, of their progenitors. Beings who have never been made in the least familiar with even the matters of fact, those especially of the scripture history, by which religious truths have been, as it were, expressed and illustrated in the substantial form of events, and personal characters. Beings who, in natural consequence of this unexercised and unfurnished condition of their understandings, will combine the utmost aversion to any effort of purely intellectual labour, with the especial dislike which it is in the human disposition to feel toward this class of subjects. What kind of ideas should you imagine to be raised in their minds, by all the words you might employ, to place within their intellectual vision some portion of this spiritual order of things,—even should you be able, which you often would not, to engage any effort of attention to the subject?—And yet we have heard this disqualification for receiving religious knowledge, in consequence of the want of early mental culture, made very light of by men whose pretensions to judgment had no less a foundation than an academical course and a consecrated profession. They would maintain, with every

appearance of thinking so, that a very little, that the barest trifle, of regulated exercise of the mind in youth, would be enough for the common people as a preparation for gaining as much knowledge of religion as they could ever want; that any such thing as a practice of reading, (a practice of very hazardous tendency,) would be needless for the purpose, since they might gain a competence of that knowledge by attendance on the public ministration in the church. And there must have been a *very* recent acquiescence in a new fashion of opinion, if great numbers of the same class of men would not, in honestly avowing their thoughts, say the same thing at this hour.

Did such men ever make an immediate, personal experiment on this happy facility with which mature ignorance learns religion? We may appeal to those pious and benevolent persons who have made the most numerous trials, for testimony to the inaptitude of uneducated people to receive that kind of instruction. You have visited, perhaps, some numerous family, or Sunday assemblage of several related families; to which you had access without awkward intrusion, in consequence of the acquaintance arising from near neighbourhood, or of little services you had rendered, or of the circum-

stance of any of their younger children coming to your charity schools. You were soon made sensible what a sterile blighted spot of rational nature you were in, by indications unequivocal to your perception, though, it may be, not easily reducible to exact description. And those indications were perhaps almost equally apparent in the young persons, in those advanced to the middle of life, and in those who were evidently destined not long to remain in it, the patriarch, perhaps, and the eldest matron, of the kindred company. You attempted by degrees, with all managements of art, as if you had been seeking to gain a favour for yourselves, to train into the talk some topic bearing toward religion; and which could be followed up to a more explicit reference to that great subject, without the abruptness which causes instant silence and recoil. We will suppose that the gloom of such a moral scene was not augmented to you, by the mortification of observing impatience of this suspension of their usual and favourite tenor of discourse, betrayed in marks of suppressed irritation, or rather by the withdrawing of one, and another, from the company. But it was quite enough to render the moments and feelings some of the most disconsolate you had ever experienced, to have thus immediately before

you a number of rational beings as in a dark prison-house, and to feel the impotence of your friendly efforts to bring them out. Their darkness of ignorance infused into your spirit the darkness of melancholy, when you perceived that the fittest words you could think of, in every change and combination in which you could dispose them, failed to impart to their understanding the most elementary and essential ideas of the most momentous subject.

You thought again, perhaps, and again, Surely *this* mode of expression, or *this*, as it is in words familiar to them, will define the meaning to their apprehension. But you were forced to perceive that the common phraseology of the language, those words which make the substance of ordinary discourse on ordinary subjects, had not, for the understandings of these persons, a general applicableness. It seemed as if the mere elemental vehicle, (if we may so name it,) available indifferently for conveying all sorts of sense, except science, had become in its meaning special and exclusive for their own sort of topics. Their narrow associations had rendered it incapable of conveying sense to them on matters foreign to their habits. When used on a subject to which they were quite unaccustomed, it became like a stream which, though one and

the same current, flows clear on the one side, and muddy (as we sometimes see for a space) on the other,—and to them it was clear only at their own edge. And if thus even the plain popular language turned dark on their understandings when employed in explanation of religion, it is easy to imagine what had been the success of any thing approaching to a more technical expression of the subject, though it went no further than such terms as are used in the Bible.

You continued, however, the effort, for a while. As desirous to shew you due civility, some of the persons, perhaps the oldest, would give assent to what you said, with some sign of acknowledgment of the importance of the concern. The assent would perhaps be expressed in a form meant and believed to be equivalent to what you had said. And when it gave an intelligible idea, it might probably betray the grossest possible misconception of the first principles of christianity. It might be a crude formation from the very same substance of which some of the worst errors of popery are constituted ; and might strongly suggest to you, in a glance of thought, how easily popery might have become the religion of ignorance, how naturally ignorance and corrupt feeling mixing with a slight vague notion of christianity, would turn it into just

such a thing as popery. You tried, perhaps, with repeated modifications of your expression, and attempts at illustration, to loosen the false notion, and to place the true one contrasted with it in such a near obviousness to the apprehension, that at least the difference should be seen, and (perhaps you hoped) a little movement excited to think further of the subject, and make a serious question of it. But all in vain. The hoary subject of your too late instruction (a spectacle reminding you painfully of the words which denominate the sign of old age "a crown of glory,") either would still take it that it came all to the same thing, or, if compelled to perceive that you really were trying to make him *unthink* his poor old notions, and learn something new and contrary, would probably retreat, in a little while, into a half sullen half despondent silence, after observing, that he was too old, "the worse was the luck," to be able to learn about such things, which he never had, like you, the "scholarship" and the time for.

In several of the party you perceived the signs of almost a total blank. They seemed but to be waiting for any trifling incident to take their attention, and keep their minds alive. Some one with a little more of listening curiosity, but without caring about the

subject, might have to observe, that it seemed to him the same kind of thing that the Methodist parson, (the term most likely to be used if any very serious and earnest christian instructor had appeared in the neighbourhood,) was lately saying in such a one's funeral sermon. It is too possible that one or two of the visages of the company, of the younger people especially, might wear, during a good part of the time, somewhat of a derisive smile, meaning, "What odd kind of stuff all this is;" as if they could not help thinking it most ludicrously strange, that any one should be talking of God, of the Saviour of mankind, of the facts of the Bible, the welfare of the soul, the shortness and value of life, and a future account, when he might be talking of the neighbouring fair, past or expected, or the local quarrels, or the last laughable incident or adventure of the hamlet. It is particularly observable, that grossly ignorant persons are very apt to take a ludicrous impression from high and solemn subjects; at least when introduced in any other time or way than in the ceremonial of public religious service; when brought forward as a personal concern, demanding consideration everywhere, and which may be urged by individual on individual. You have commonly enough seen this provoke the grin of stupidity and

folly. And if you asked yourselves, (for it were in vain to ask *them*,) why it produced this so perverse effect, you had only to consider that, to minds abandoned through ignorance to be totally engrossed by the immediate objects of sense, the grave assumption, and emphatic enforcement, of the transcendent importance of a wholly unseen and spiritual economy, has much the appearance and effect of a great lie attempted to be passed upon them. You might indeed recollect also, that the most which some of them are likely to have learnt about religion, is the circumstance, that the persons professing to make it an earnest concern are actually regarded as fit objects of derision by multitudes, not of the vulgar order only, but including many of the wealthy, the genteel, the magisterial, and the dignified in point of rank.

Individuals of the most ignorant class may stroll into a place of worship, bearing their character so conspicuously in their appearance and manner as to draw the particular notice of the preacher, while addressing the congregation. It may be, that having taken their stare round the place, they go out, just, perhaps, when he is in the midst of a marked, prominent, and even picturesque illustration, possibly from some of the striking facts or

characters of the scripture narrations, which had not made the slightest ingress on their thoughts or imagination. Or they are pleased to stay through the service ; during which his eye is frequently led to where several of them may be seated together. Without an appearance of addressing them personally, he shall be excited to direct a special effort toward what he surmises to be the state of their minds. He may in this effort acquire an additional force, emphasis, and pointedness of delivery ; but especially his utmost mental force shall be brought into action to strike upon their faculties with vivid rousing ideas, plainly and briefly expressed. And he fancies, perhaps, that he has at least arrested their attention ; that what is going from his mind is in some manner or other taking a place in theirs ; when some inexpressibly trivial occurring circumstance shews him, that the hold he has on them is not of the strength of a spider's web. Those thoughts, those intellects, those souls, are instantly and wholly gone—from a representation of one of the awful visitations of divine judgment in the ancient world—a description of sublime angelic agency, as in some recorded fact in the Bible—an illustration of the discourse, miracles, or expiatory sorrows of the Redeemer

of the world—a strong appeal to conscience on past sin—a statement, perhaps in the form of example, of an important duty in given circumstances—a cogent enforcement of some specific point as of most essential moment in respect to eternal safety;—from the attempted grasp, or supposed seizure, of any such subject, these rational spirits started away, with infinite facility, to the movements occasioned by the falling of a hat from a peg.

By the time that any semblance of attention returns, the preacher's address may have taken the form of pointed interrogation, with very defined supposed facts, or even real ones, to give the question and its principle as it were a tangible substance. Well; just at the moment when his questions converged to a point, which was to have been a dart of conviction striking the understanding, and compelling the common sense and conscience of the auditors to answer for themselves,—at that moment, he perceives two or three of the persons he had particularly in view begin an active whispering, prolonged with the accompaniment of the appropriate vulgar smiles. They may possibly relapse at length, through sheer dulness, into tolerable decorum; and the instructor, not quite losing sight of them, tries yet again to impel some serious ideas, through the obtuseness of their mental being.

But he can clearly perceive, after the animal spirits have thus been a little quieted by the necessity of sitting still awhile, the signs of a perfectly stupid vacancy, which is hardly sensible that any thing is actually saying, and probably makes, in the case of some of the individuals, what is mentally but a slight transition to yawning and sleep.

Utter ignorance is a most effectual fortification to a bad state of the mind. Prejudice may perhaps be removed ; unbelief may be reasoned with ; even demoniacs have been compelled to bear witness to the truth ; but the stupidity of confirmed ignorance, not only defeats the ultimate efficacy of the means for making men wiser and better, but stands in preliminary defiance to the very act of their application. It reminds us of an account, in one of the relations of the French Egyptian campaigns, of the attempt to reduce a garrison posted in a bulky fort of mud. Had the defences been of timber, the besiegers might have burnt them ; had they been of stone, even blocks of granite, they might have shaken and ultimately breached them by the incessant battery of their cannon ; or they might have undermined and blown them up. But the huge mound of mud had nothing susceptible of fire or any other force ; the missiles from the artillery were discharged

but to be buried in the dull mass ; and all the means of demolition were baffled.

The most melancholy of the exemplifications of the effect of ignorance, as constituting an incapacity for receiving religious instruction, have been presented to those who have visited persons thus devoid of knowledge in sickness and the approach to death. Supposing them to manifest alarm and solicitude, it is deplorable to see how powerless their understandings are, for any distinct conception of what, or why, it is that they fear, or regret, or desire. The objects of their apprehension come round them as vague forms of darkness, instead of distinctly exhibited dangers and foes, which they might steadily contemplate, and think how to escape or encounter. And how little does the benevolent instructor find it possible for him to do, when he applies his mind to the painful task of reducing this gloomy confused vision to the plain defined truth of their unhappy situation, set in order before their eyes.

He deems it necessary to speak of the most elementary principles—the perfect holiness and justice of God—the corresponding holiness, and the all-comprehending extent, of his law, appointed to his creatures—the absolute duty of conformity to it in every act,

word, and thought—the necessary condemnation consequent on failure—the dreadful evil, therefore, of sin, both in its principle and consequences. God—perfect holiness—justice—law—universal conformity—sin—condemnation! Alas! the hapless auditor has no such sense of the force of terms, and no such analogical ideas, as to furnish the medium for conveying these representations to his understanding. He never had, at any time; and now there may be in his mind all the additional confusion, and incapacity of fixed attention, arising from pain, debility, and sleeplessness. All this therefore passes before him with a tenebrious glimmer, and is gone; like lightning faintly penetrating to a man behind a thick black curtain.

The instructor attempts a personal application, endeavouring to give the disturbed conscience a rational direction, and a distinct cognizance. But he finds, as he might expect to find, that a conscience without knowledge has never taken but a very small portion of the man's habits of life under its jurisdiction; and that it is a most hopeless thing to attempt to send it back reinforced, to reclaim and conquer, through all the past, the whole extent of its rightful but never assumed dominion. So feeble and confined in the exercise of judgment, it is especially incapable

of admitting the monitor's estimate of the measure of guilt involved in omission, and in an irreligious state of the mind, as an exceedingly grave addition to the account of criminal action. The person is totally and honestly unable to conceive of substantial guilt in any thing of which he can ask, what injury it has done to any body. This single point—whether positive harm has been done to any one,—comprehends the whole essence and sum of the conscious accountableness of very ignorant people. Material wrong, *very* material wrong, to their fellow mortals, they have a conscience that they should not do; a conscience, however, which they would deem it hard to be obliged to maintain quite entire even to this confined extent; and which therefore admits some compromise and gives some license, with respect to any kind of wrong which may have been commonly practised, upon a kind of understanding that in certain cases men may set principle aside, and each one must take the best care he can of himself. At this confine, itself so undecidedly marked, these very ignorant persons lose the sense of obligation, and feel absolved from any further jurisdiction. So coarse and narrow a conscience as to what they *do*, is little likely to be refined and extended into a cognizance of what they *are*.

As for a duty absolute in the nature of things, or a duty as owing to themselves, or a duty as imposed by the Almighty,—*that their minds should be in a certain prescribed state*,—there does really require a perfectly new manner of the action of intellect to enable them to descry its existence. And this habitual insensibility to any jurisdiction over their internal state, now meets, in its consequences, the supposed instructor. In consideration of the vast importance of this part of a rational creature's accountableness, and partly, too, from a desire to avoid the invidiousness of appearing as a judicial censor of the sick man's practical conduct, he insists in an especial manner on this subject of the state within, endeavouring to expose that dark world by the light of religion to the sick man's conscience. But to give in an hour the *understanding* which it requires the discipline of many years to render competent! How vain the attempt! The man's sense of guilt fixes almost exclusively on something that has been improper in his practical courses. He professes to acknowledge the evil of this; and perhaps with a certain stress of expression, intended, by an apparent responsiveness to the serious emphasis which the monitor is laying on another part of the accountableness and guilt, to take him off from thus endea-

vouring, as it appears to the ignorant sufferer, to make him more of a sinner than there is any reason. By continuing to press the subject, the instructor may find himself in danger of being regarded as having taken upon him the unkind office of accuser in his own name, and of his own will and authority.

When inculcating the necessity of repentance, he will perceive the indistinctness of apprehension, respecting the difference between that kind of forced recoil from sin which is caused by dread of impending consequences, and an antipathy to its essential nature. And even if this distinction, which admits of very easy forms of exemplification, should thus be rendered in a degree intelligible, the man cannot make the application. The instructor observes, as one of the most striking results of a want of disciplined mental exercise, an utter inability for self-inspection. There is before his eyes, looking at him, but a stranger to himself, a man on whose mind no other minds, except One, can shed a light of self-manifestation, to save him from the most fatal mistakes.

If the monitor would turn, (rather from an impulse to relieve the gloom of the scene, than from any thing he sees even faintly approaching toward a right apprehension of the

austerer truths of religion,) if he would turn his efforts, to the effect of directing on this dark spirit the benign rays of the christian redemption, what is he to do for terms,—yes, for very terms? Mediator, sacrifice, atonement, satisfaction; faith, reliance; even the expression believing in Christ; merit of the death of Christ, acquittal, acceptance, justification:—he knows, or will soon learn, that he might as well talk in the language of the occult sciences. And he is forced down to such expedients of grovelling paraphrase, and humiliating analogy, that he becomes sensible his method of endeavouring to make a divine subject comprehensible, is to divest it of all its radiance, and reduce it, in order that it may not confound, to the rank of things which have not majesty enough to impress with awe. And after this has been done, to the utmost of his ability, and to the unavoidable weariness of his suffering auditor, he is distressed to think of the proportion between the insignificance of any ideas which this man's mind now possesses of the economy of redemption, and the magnitude of the interest in which he stands dependent on it. A symptom or assurance which should impart to the sick man a confidence of his recovery, would appear to him a far greater good than all that he can comprehend as

offered to him in that economy. Some crude sentiment, as, that he “hopes Jesus Christ will stand his friend;” that it was very good of the Saviour to think of us; that he wishes he knew what to do to get his help; that Jesus Christ has done him good in other things, and he hopes he will now again at the last;*—such expressions will afford little to alleviate the gloomy feelings, with which the serious visitor descends from the chamber in which, perhaps, he may hear, a few days after, that the man he conversed with lies a dead body.

But such benevolent visitors have to tell of still more melancholy exemplifications of the effects of ignorance in the close of life. They have seen the neglect of early cultivation, and the subsequent estrangement from all knowledge and thinking, except about business and folly, result in such a stupefaction of mind, that irreligious and immoral persons, expecting no more than a few days of life, and by no means in a state of physical lethargy, were

* Such an expression as this would hardly have occurred but from recollection of fact, in the instance of an aged farmer, (the owner of the farm,) in his last illness. In the way of reassuring his somewhat doubtful hope that Christ would not fail him when now had recourse to, at his extreme need, he said, (to the writer,) “Jesus Christ has sent me a deal of good crops.”

absolutely incapable of being alarmed at the near approach of death. They did not deny, nor in the infidel sense disbelieve, what was said to them of the awfulness of that event, and its consequences ; but they had actually never thought enough of death to have any solemn associations with the idea. And their faculties were become so rigid, so stiffened, as it were, that they could not now acquire them ; no, not while the portentous spectre was unveiling his visage to them, in near and still nearer approach ; not when the element of another world was beginning to penetrate to their souls, through the rents of their mortal tabernacle. It appeared that literally their thoughts *could not* go out from what they had been through life immersed in, to contemplate, (with any realizing feeling,) a grand change of being, expected so soon to take place. They could not go to the fearful brink to look off. It was a stupor of the soul not to be awaked but by the actual plunge into the realities of eternity. In such a case, the instinctive repugnance to death might be visible and acknowledged. But the feeling was, If it must be so, there is no help for it ; and as to what may come after, we must take our chance. In this temper and manner, we recollect a sick man, of this untaught class, answering the inquiry how he felt himself,

“ Getting worse ; I suppose I shall make a die of it.” And some pious neighbours, earnestly exhorting him to solemn concern and preparation, could not make him understand, we repeat with emphasis, *understand*, why there was occasion for any extraordinary disturbance of mind. Yet this man was not inferior to those around him in sense for the common business of life.

After a tedious length of suffering, and when death is plainly inevitable, it is not very uncommon for persons under this infatuation to express a wish for its arrival, simply as a deliverance from what they are enduring, without troubling themselves with a thought of what may follow. “ I hope it will please God soon to release me,” was the expression, to his religious medical attendant, of such an ignorant and insensible mortal, within an hour of his death, which was evidently and directly brought on by his vices. And he uttered it without a word, or the smallest indicated emotion, of penitence or solicitude ; though he had passed his life in a neighbourhood abounding with the public means of religious instruction and warning.

When earnest, persisting, and seriously menacing admonitions, of pious visitors or friends, almost literally compel such unhappy persons to some precise recognition of the

subject, their answers will often be faithfully representative, and a consistent completion, of their course through mental darkness, from childhood to the mortal hour. We recollect the instance of a wicked old man, who, within that very hour, replied to the urgent admonitions by which a religious neighbour felt it a painful duty to make a last effort to alarm him, "What, do you believe that God can think of damning me because I may have been as bad as other folk? I am sure he will do no such thing: he is far too good for that."

We cannot close this detailed illustration of so gloomy a subject, without again advertising to a phenomenon as admirable as, unhappily, it is rare; and for which the observers may, if they choose, go round the whole circle of their philosophy, and begin again, to find any adequate cause, other than the most immediate agency of the Almighty Spirit. Here and there an instance occurs, to the delight of the christian philanthropist, of a person brought up in utter ignorance and barbarian rudeness, and so continuing till late, sometimes very late in life; and then, at last, after such a length of time and habit has completed its petrifying effect, suddenly seized upon by a mysterious power, and taken, with an alarming and irresistible force,

out of the dark hold in which the spirit has lain imprisoned and torpid, into the sphere of thought and feeling.

Occasion is taken this once more of advert-
ing to such facts, not so much for the purpose
of magnifying the nature, as of simply exhi-
biting the effect, of an influence that can
breathe with such power on the obtuse intel-
lectual faculties ; which it appears, in the
most signal of these instances, almost to create
anew. It is exceedingly striking to observe
how the contracted rigid soul seems to soften,
and grow warm, and expand, and quiver with
life. With the new energy infused, it painfully
struggles to work itself into freedom, from the
wretched contortion in which it has so long
been fixed as by the impressed spell of some
infernal magic. It is seen filled with a
distressed and indignant emotion at its own
ignorance ; actuated with a restless earnest-
ness to be informed ; acquiring an un-
wonted pliancy of its faculties to thought ;
attaining a perception, combined of intelli-
gence and moral sensibility, to which nume-
rous things are becoming discernible and
affecting, that were as non-existent before.
It is not in the very extreme strength of their
import that we employ such terms of descrip-
tion ; the malice of irreligion may easily force
them into poetical excess ; but we have

known instances in which the change, the intellectual change, has been so conspicuous, within a brief space of time, that even an infidel observer must have forfeited all claim to be esteemed a man of sense, if he would not acknowledge,—This that you call divine grace, whatever it may really be, is the strangest awakener of faculties after all. And to a devout man, it is a spectacle of most enchanting beauty, thus to see the immortal plant, which has been under a malignant blast while sixty or seventy years have passed over it, coming out at length in the bloom of life.

We cannot hesitate to draw the inference, that if religion is so auspicious to the intellectual faculties, the cultivation and exercise of those faculties must be of great advantage to religion.

Perhaps we should not finally dismiss the subject of the effect of ignorance, as constituting an incapacity of receiving religious instruction, without just noticing the injury it does to many who are sincerely disposed to attend to such instruction, in fitting their minds to receive, as religious truth, all manner of absurdities. By a double mischief of operation, it creates the same degree of capacity to receive the subject wrong, as of incapacity

to receive it right. It reminds us of the story of a tribe of Indians denominated "moon-eyed," who, not being able to look at things by the light of the sun, were reduced to look at them under the glimmering of the moon, by which light it is an inevitable circumstance of human vision to receive the images of things in perverted and deceptive forms.

We have expressly said, (what indeed there was no need to say,) that such a noble exemplification as above described, is very rare : it is the superlative case. If we come down to a very considerably lower degree, we shall find the examples numerous, among the uneducated subjects of genuine religion, of persons remarkably improved in the power and exercise of their reason ; and we may assume that *some* share of this improvement reaches to all who are really under this most beneficent influence in the creation.* But still

* *Really* under this influence, we repeat, pointedly ; for we justly put all others out of the account. It is nothing (as against this asserted influence on the intelligent faculty) that great numbers who may contribute to swell a public bustle about religion ; who may run together at the call of whim, imposture, or insanity, assuming that name ; who may acquire, instead of any other folly, a turn for talking, disputing, or ranting, about that subject ; it is nothing, in short, that *any* who are not in real, conscientious seriousness the disciples of religion, can be shewn to be no better for it, in point of improved understanding.

it must be acknowledged of too many, who are in a measure, we may candidly believe, under the genuine efficacy of religion, that they have attained, through its influence, but so diminutive a proportion of the improvement of intellect, that they can be well pleased with a great deal of absurdity of religious notions and language. While, however, we confess and regret that it is so, we should not overlook the obvious causes and excuses for it, partly in the constitution of the mind, partly in extraneous circumstances. Many whose attention is in honest earnestness drawn to religion, are naturally endowed with so scanty an allotment of the thinking power, strictly so denominated, that it would have required high cultivation to raise them to the level of very moderate understanding. There are some who appear to have a natural invincible tendency to an uncouth fantastic mode of forming their notions. It is in the nature of others, that whatever cultivation they might have received, it would still have been by their passions, rather than, in any due proportion, by their reason, that an important concern would have taken and retained hold of them. It may have happened to not a few, that circumstances unfavourable to the understanding were connected with the causes or occasions of their first effectual religious

impressions. Some perverse cast in the exposition of the christian faith, not essentially vitiating, but very much distorting and cramping it, or some peculiarity or narrow-mindedness of the teachers, may have conveyed their effect, to enter, as it were, at the door at the same moment that it was opened by the force of a solemn conviction, and to be retained and cherished ever after on the strength of this association. This may have tended to give an obliquity to the disciple's understanding, or to arrest and dwarf its growth, to fix it in prejudices instead of training it to judgments, or to dispense with its exercise by merging it in a kind of quietism ; so that the proper tendency of religion to excite its activity was overruled and frustrated. It is most unfortunate that thus there may be from things directly associated with a man's piety, an influence operating to disable his understanding ; as if there had been mixed with the incense of a devout service in the temple, a soporific ingredient which had irresistibly the effect of closing the worshipper's eyes in slumber.

Now suppose all these worthy persons, with so many things of a special kind against them, to be also under the one great calamity of a neglected education, and is it any wonder that they can admit religious truths in shapes very strange and but little luminous ; that

they have an uncertain and capricious test of what is genuine, and not much vigilance to challenge plausible semblances ; that they should be caught by the exhibition in some quaint form of a truth which would be of too intellectual a substance as presented in its pure simplicity ; and should be ready to receive with approbation a great deal of what is a heavy disgrace to the name of religious doctrine and ministration ? Where is the wonder that crudeness, incoherence, and inconsistency of notions, should not disappoint and offend minds that have not, ten times since they came into the world, been compelled to form two ideas with precision and then compare them discriminately or combine them strictly, on any subject beyond the narrow scope of their ordinary pursuits ? Where is the wonder, if many such persons take noise and fustian for a glowing zeal and a lofty elevation ; if they mistake a wheedling cant for affectionate solicitude ; if they defer to pompous egotism and dogmatical assertion, from the obvious interest which those who cannot inquire much for themselves have to believe their teacher is an oracle ; if they are delighted with whimsical conceits as strokes of discovery and surprise, and yet at the same time are pleased with common-place, and endless repetition,

as an exemption from mental effort; and if they are gratified by vulgarity of diction and illustration, as bringing religion to the level where they are at home? Nay, if an artful pretender, or half-lunatic visionary, or some poor set of dupes of their own inflated self-importance, should give out, that they are come into the world for the manifestation, at last, of true Christianity, which the divine revelation has failed, till their advent, to explain to any of the numberless devout and sagacious examiners of it,—what is there in the minds of the most ignorant class of persons desirous to secure the benefits of religion, that can be relied on to certify them, that they shall not forego the greatest blessing ever offered to them by setting at nought these pretensions?

It is grievous to think there should be a large and almost perpetual stream of words, conveying crudities, extravagances, arrogant dictates of ignorance, pompous nothings, vulgarities, catches of idle fantasy, and impertinences of the speaker's vanity, as religious instruction, to assemblages of ignorant people. But then, how to turn this current away, to waste itself, as it deserves, in the swamps of the desert “wherein there is no man?” The thing to be wished is, that it were possible to put some strong coercion on

the *minds* (we deprecate all other restraint) of the teachers, a compulsion to feel the necessity of information, sense, disciplined thinking, the correct use of words, and the avoidance at once of dull formality and wild excess. There are signs of amendment, certainly; but while the passion of human beings for notoriety lasts, (which will be yet some time,) there will not fail to be men, in any number required, ready to exhibit in religion, in any manner in which the people are willing to be pleased with them. The effectual method will be, to take the matter in the inverted order, and endeavour to secure that those who assemble to be taught, shall already have learnt so much *by other means*, as to impose upon their teachers the necessity of wisdom. But by what other means, except the discipline of the best education possible to be given to them, and the subsequent voluntary self-improvement to which it may be hoped that such an education would often lead?

We cannot dismiss this topic, of the unhappy effect of extreme ignorance on persons religiously disposed, in rendering them both liable and inclined to receive their ideas of the highest subject in a disorderly, perverted, and debased form, mixed largely with other men's folly and their own, without noticing

with pleasure an additional testimony to the connexion between genuine religion and intelligence. It arises from the fact, apparent to any discriminating observer, that, as a *general* rule, the most truly pious of the illiterate disciples of religion, those who have the most of its devotional feeling, do certainly manifest more of the operation of judgment in their religion than is evinced by those of less solemn and devout sentiment. The former will unquestionably be found, when on the same level as to the measure of natural faculty and the want of previous cultivation, to shew more discernment, to be less captivated by noise and extravagance, and more intent on obtaining a clear comprehension of that faith, which they feel it is but a reasonable obligation that they should endeavour to understand, if they are to repose upon it their most important hopes.

SECTION VI.

Supposed method of verifying the preceding representation of the ignorance of the people.—

Renewed expressions of wonder and mortification that this should be the true description of the English nation.—Prodigious exertions of this nation for the accomplishment of objects foreign to the improvement of the people.—Effects which might have resulted from far less exertion and resource applied to that object.—The contrast between what has been done and what might have been done, by the exertion of the national strength, exposed in a series of parallel representations.—Total unconcern, till a recent period, of the generality of persons in the higher classes, respecting the mental state of the populace.—Indications of an important change in the manner of estimating them.—Measures attempted and projected for their improvement.—Some of these measures and methods insignificant in the esteem of projectors of merely political schemes for the amendment of the popular condition.—But questions to those projectors

on the efficacy of such schemes.—Most desirable, nevertheless, that the political systems and the governing powers of states could be converted to promote so grand a purpose.—But expostulations addressed to those who, desponding of this aid, despond therefore of the object itself.—Incitement to individual exertion.—Reference to the Sublimest Example.—Imputation of extravagant hope.—Repelled; first, by a full acknowledgment how much the hopes of sober-minded projectors of improvement are limited by what they see of the disorder in the essential constitution of our nature; and next, by a plain statement, in a series of particulars, of what they nevertheless judge it rational to expect from a general extension of good education.—Answer to the question, whether it is presumed that any merely human discipline can reduce its subjects under the predominance of religion.—Answer to the inquiry, what is the extent of the knowledge of which it is desired to put the common people in possession.—Observations on supposed degrees of possible advancement of the knowledge and welfare of the community; with reflections of astonishment and regret at the actual state of ignorance, degradation, and wretchedness, after so many thousand years have passed away.—

Congratulatory notice of those worthy individuals who have been rescued from the effects of a neglected education by their own resolute mental exertions.

THUS it has been attempted, we fear with too much prolixity and repetition, to describe the evils attendant on a neglected state of the minds of the people. The representation does not comprehend all those even of magnitude and prominence; but it displays that portion of them which is the most serious and calamitous, as being the effect which the people's ignorance has on their moral and religious interests. And we think no one who has attentively surveyed the state and character of the lower orders of the community, in this country, will impute exaggeration to the picture. It is rather to be feared that the reality is of still darker shade; and that a more strikingly gloomy exhibition might be formed, by such a process as the following:— That a certain number of the most observant of the philanthropic persons, who have had most intercourse with the classes in question, for the purposes of instruction, charitable aid, or perhaps of furnishing employment, should relate the most characteristic circumstances and anecdotes within their own experience,

illustrative of this mental and moral condition; and that these should be arranged, without any comment, under the respective heads of the preceding sketch, or of a more comprehensive enumeration. Each of them might repeat, in so many words, the most notable things he has heard uttered as disclosing the notions entertained of Deity, or any part of religion; or those which have been formed of the ground and extent of duty and accountableness; or the imaginations respecting the termination of life, and a future retribution. They might relate the judgments they have heard pronounced on characters and particular modes of conduct; on important events in the world; on any thing, in short, which may afford a test of the correctness and power of uncultivated thought. Let the recital include both the expressions of individual conception, and those of the most current maxims and common-places; and let them be the sayings of persons in health, and of those languishing and dying. Then let there be produced a numerous assortment of characteristic samples of practical conduct; conduct not simply proceeding, in a general way, from corrupt disposition, but bearing the special marks of the cast and direction given to that disposition by extreme ignorance. The assemblage of things thus

recounted, when the actual circumstances were also added of the wretchedness corresponding and inseparable, would constitute such an exhibition of fact, as any description of those evils in general terms would incur the charge of rhetorical excess in attempting to rival. We can well imagine, that some of these persons of large experience may have accompanied us through the foregoing series of illustrations with a feeling, that they could have displayed the subject with a more impressive prominence.

And now again the grievous reflection comes upon us, that all this is the description of the major part of the people of our own nation. Of this nation, the theme of so many lofty strains of panegyric; of this nation, stretching forth its powers in ambitious enterprize, with infinite pride and cost, to all parts of the globe;—just as if a family were seen eagerly intent on making some new appropriation, or going out to maintain some competition or feud with its neighbours, or mixing perhaps in the strife of athletic games, or drunken frays, at the very time that several of its members are lying dead in the house. So that the fame of the nation resounded, and its power made itself felt, in every clime, it was not worth a consideration, that a vast pro-

portion of its people were systematically
 consigned, through ignorance and the irreligi-
 gion and depravity inseparable from it, to
 wretchedness and even final perdition. It is
 matter for never-ending amazement, that
 during one generation after another, the pre-
 siding wisdom in this chief of Christian and
 Protestant States, should have thrown out
 the living strength of that state into almost
 every mode of agency under heaven, rather
 than that of promoting the state itself to the
 condition of a happy community of cultivated
 beings. What stupendous infatuation, what
 disastrous ascendancy of the Power of Dark-
 ness, that this energy should have been sent
 forth to pervade all parts of the world in
 quest of objects, to inspire and accomplish
 innumerable projects, political and military,
 and to lavish itself, even to exhaustion and
 fainting at its vital source, on every alien inte-
 rest; while here, at home, so large a part of
 the social body was in a moral and intellec-
 tual sense dying and putrefying over the land.
 And it was thus perishing for want of the
 vivifying principle of knowledge, which one
 fifth part of this mighty amount of exertion
 would have been sufficient to diffuse into
 every corner and cottage of the island.
 Within its circuit, a countless multitude
 were seen passing away their mortal existence

little better, in any view, than mere sentient shapes of matter, and by their depravity inexpressibly worse; and yet this hideous fact had not the weight of the very “dust of the balance,” in the deliberation whether a grand exertion of the national vigour and resource could have any object so worthy, (with God for the Judge,) as some scheme of foreign aggrandizement, some interference in remote quarrels, an avengement, by anticipation, of wrongs pretended to be foreseen, or the obstinate prosecution of some fatal career, begun in the very levity of pride, by a decision in which some perverse individual or party in ascendancy had the influence to obtain a corrupt or deluded concurrence.

The national *honour*, perhaps, would be alleged, in a certain matter of punctilio, for the necessity of undertakings of incalculable consumption, by men who could see no national *disgrace* in the circumstance that several millions of the persons composing the nation could not read the ten commandments. Or the national *safety* has been pleaded, to a similar purpose, in terms of patriotic emphasis, upon the appearance of some slight threatening symptoms; and the wise men so pleading, would have scouted as the very madness of fanaticism any dissuasion that should have advised,—“Do you, instead, apply your best

efforts, and the nation's means, to raise the barbarous population from their ignorance and debasement, and you really may venture some little trust in Divine Providence for the nation's safety, meanwhile."

If a contemplative and religious man, looking back through one or two centuries, were enabled to take, with an adequate comprehension of intellect, the sum and value of so much of the astonishing course of the national exertions of this country, as the Supreme Judge has put to the criminal account of pride and ambition; and if he could then place in contrast to the transactions on which that mighty amount has been expended, a sober estimate of what so much exerted vigour *might* have accomplished for the intellectual and moral exaltation of the people, it could not be without an emotion of horror that he would say, Who is to be accountable, who *has been* accountable, for this difference? He would no longer wonder at any plagues and judgments, which may have been inflicted on such a state. And he would solemnly adjure all those, especially, who profess in a peculiar manner to feel the power of the Christian Religion, to beware how they implicate themselves, by avowed or even implied approbation, in what must be a matter of fearful account before the highest tribunal. If some such persons, of great merit and in-

fluence, have habitually given, in a public capacity, this approbation, he would urge it on their consciences, in the evening of life, to consider whether, in the prospect of that tribunal, they have not one duty yet to perform,—to throw off from their minds the bondage which an order of notions and men imposes by the mere fact of being in predominance, to estimate as christians, about to retire from the scene, the actual effects on this nation of a policy which might have been nearly the same if christianity had been extinct, and then to record a solemn, recanting, final protest against a system to which they have so long endeavoured to make that religion itself a party.

Any reference made to such a prospect, implies that there is attributed to those who can feel its seriousness, a state of mind perfectly unknown to the generality of what are called public men. For it is notorious that, to the mere working politician, there is nothing on earth that sounds so idly or so ludicrously as a reference to a judgment in another world, to which the public transactions of this are to be carried. If the Divine jurisdiction would submit to retire and contract its scope in obsequiousness to human indifference and rejection, how large a province it would leave free! That the impious carelessness which *assumes* that the ground is so left

free, justifies the proceedings adopted on that presumption, may be reserved as a plea to be tried in the great account, when the responsibility for them shall be charged. For assuredly there will be persons found, to be summoned forth as accountable for that conduct of states which we are contemplating. Such a moral agency could not throw off its responsibility into the air, to be dissipated and lost, like the black smoke of forges or volcanoes. This one grand thing, (the improvement of the people,) left undone, while a thousand arduous things have been done or strenuously endeavoured, cannot be less than an awful charge *somewhere*. And where?—but on all who have voluntarily concurred and co-operated in systems and schemes, which could deliberately put *such* a thing last? Last! nay, not even that; for they have, till recently, as we have seen, thrown it almost wholly out of consideration. A long succession of men are gone to this audit. Let the rest beware.

We were supposing a thoughtful man to draw out to his view a parallel and contrast, exhibiting, on the one side, the series of objects on which, during several ages, an enormous exertion of the national energy has been directed; and on the other, those improvements of the people which might have been effected by so much of that exertion

as he deems to have been wasted. In this process, he might often be inclined to single out particular parts and points in the disapproved series, to be put in special contrast over against the possibilities on the opposite line. For example; there perhaps occurs to his view some island, of inconsiderable extent, the haunt of pestilence, rendered productive solely by means involving the most flagrant iniquity; an iniquity which it avenges by opening a premature grave for many of his countrymen, and by being a most powerful moral corrupter of the rest. Such a blasted spot, nevertheless, may have been one of the most material objects of a widely destructive war, which has in effect sunk incalculable treasure in the sea, and in the sands, ditches, and fields of plague-infested shores; with a dreadful sacrifice of blood, life, and all the best moral feelings and habits. Its possession, perhaps, was the prize and triumph of all the grand exertion, the equivalent for all the cost, misery, and crime.

Or there may occur to him the name of some fortress, in a less remote region, where the Christian nations seem to have vied with one another which of them should deposit the greatest number of victims, securely kept in the charge of death, to rise and testify for them, at the last day, how much they have

been governed by the peaceful spirit of their professed religion. He reads that his countrymen, conjoined with others, have battled round this fortress, wasting the vicinity, but richly manuring the soil with blood. They have co-operated in hurling upon the abodes of thousands of inhabitants within its walls, a thunder and lightning incomparably more destructive than those of nature; and have put fire and earthquake under the fortifications; shouting, "to make the welkin ring," at sight of the consequent ruin and chasm, which have opened an entrance for hostile rage. They have taken the place,—and then they have surrendered it. The next year perhaps they have taken it again; to be again at last given up, upon compulsion or in the acknowledgment of right, to the very same party to which it had belonged previously to all this horrible commotion. The operations in this local and very narrow portion of the grand affray of monarchies, he may calculate to have cost his country as much as the amount earned by the toils of the whole life of all the inhabitants of one of its considerable towns; setting aside from his view the more portentous part of the account,—the carnage, the crimes, and the devastation committed on the foreign tract, the place of abode of people who had little interest in the contest, and no power to prevent it. And why was all this?

He may not be able to divest himself of the principles that should rule the judgment of a moralist and a christian, in order to think like a statesman; and therefore may find no better reason than that, when despots would quarrel, Britain must take the occasion to prove itself a great power, by bearing a high hand amidst their rivalries; though this should be at the expense of having the scene at home chequered between children learning little more than how to curse, and old persons dying without knowing how to put words together to pray.

The question may have been, in one part of the world or another, which of two wicked individuals of the same family, competitors for sovereign authority, should be actually invested with it, they being equal in the qualifications and dispositions to make the worst use of it. And the decision of such a question was worthy, that England should expend what remained of her depressed strength from previous exertions of it in some equally meritorious cause.

Or the supposed reviewer of our national history may find, somewhere in his retrospect, that a certain brook or swamp in a wilderness, or a stripe of waste, or the settlement of boundaries in respect to some insignificant traffic, was difficult of adjustment between jealous, irritated, and mutually incursive

neighbours ; and therefore national honour and interest equally required that war should be lighted up by land and sea, through several quarters of the globe. Or a dissension may have arisen upon the matter of some petty tax on an article of commerce : an absolute will had been rashly signified on the subject ; pride had committed itself, and was peremptory for persisting ; and the resolution was to be prosecuted through a wide tempest of destruction protracted perhaps many years ; and only terminating in the loss, as to the leading power concerned, of infinitely more than this “ last fatal arbitrement ” had been determined on as the means of maintaining ; — besides the absolutely fathomless amount of every kind of cost in this progress to final frustration. — But there would be no end of recounting facts of this order.

Now the comparative estimator has to set against a large array of things of this character, the forms of imagined good which might, during the ages of this retrospect, have been realized by an incomparably less exhausting series of exertion, an exertion, indeed, continually renovating its own resources. Imagined good, we said ; — alas ! the evil stands in long and awful display on the ground of history ; the hypothetical good presents itself as but a dream ; with this difference, that there is resting on the conscience of beings

somewhere still existing, an eternal accountability for its not having been a reality.

For such an *island*, as we have supposed our comparer to read of, he can, in imagination, look on a space of proportional extent in any part of his native country, taking a district as a detached section of a general national picture. And he can figure to himself the result, resplendent upon this tract, of so much energy, there beneficently expended, as that island had cost: an energy, we mean *equivalent in measure*, while put forth in the infinitely different *mode* of an exertion, by all appropriate means, to improve the reason, manners, and morals of the people. What a prevalence of intelligence, what a delightful civility of deportment, what repression of the more gross and obtrusive forms of vice, what domestic decorum, attentive education of the children, appropriateness of manner and readiness of apprehension in attendance on public offices of religion, sense and good order in assemblages for the assertion and exercise of civil and political rights! All this he can imagine as the possible result.

We were supposing his attention fixed awhile on the recorded operations against some strongly fortified place, in a region marked through every part with the traces and memorials of the often renewed conflicts of the christian states. And we suppose him

to make a collective estimate of all kinds of human ability exerted around and against that particular devoted place; an estimate which divides this off as a portion of the whole enormous quantity of exertion expended by his country in all that region in the campaigns of a war, or of a century's wars. He may then again endeavour, by a rule of equivalence, to conceive the same amount of exertion in quite another way; to imagine human forces equal in *quantity* to all that putting forth of strength, physical, mental, and financial, for annoyance and destruction, expended, instead, in the operation of effecting the utmost improvement which they *could* effect, in the mental cultivation and the morals of the inhabitants of one large town in his own country.

In figuring to himself the channels and instrumentality through which this great stream of energy might have passed into this operation, on a detached spot of his country, he will soon have many specific means presented to his view: Schools, of the most perfect appointment, in every section and corner of the town; a system of friendly but cogent dealing with all the people of inferior condition, relatively to the necessity of their practical accordance to the plans of educa-

tion ;* an exceedingly copious supply, for individual possession, of the best books of elementary knowledge, accompanied, as we need not say, by the sacred volume ; a number of assortments of useful and pleasing books for circulation, established under strict order, and with appointments of honorary and other rewards to those who gave evidence of having made the best use of them ; a number of places of resort where various branches of the most generally useful and attainable knowledge and arts should be explained and applied, by every expedient of familiar, practical, and entertaining illustration, admitting a degree of co-operation by those who attended to see and hear ; and an abundance of commodious places for religious instruction on the sabbath, where there should be intelligent and zealous men to impart it. Our speculator has a good right to suppose a high degree of these qualifications in his public

* It is here most confidently presumed, that any man who looks, in a right state of his senses, at the manner in which the children are still brought up, in many parts of the land, will hear with contempt any hypocritical protest against so much interference with the discretion, the liberty, of parents ;—the discretion, the liberty, forsooth, of bringing up their children a nuisance on the face of the earth.

teachers of religion, when he is to imagine something parallel in this department to the skill and ardour displayed in the supposed military operations. He may add to such an apparatus a police, (if we may employ that rather ungracious term,) faithful and vigilant against every cognizable form of neglect and immorality. And besides all this, there would be a great variety of undefined and optional activity of benevolent and intelligent men of local influence.

Under so auspicious a combination of discipline, he will not indeed fancy, in his transient vision, that he beholds Athens revived, with its bright intelligence all converted to minister to morality, religion, and happiness; but he will, in sober consistency, we think, with what is known of the relation of cause and effect, imagine a place far surpassing any actual town or city on earth. And let it be distinctly kept in view, that to produce the effect exhibited in this ideal spectacle, he is just supposing to have been expended, on the population of the town, a measure of exertion and means equal, (as far as agencies in so different a form and direction can be brought to any rule of comparative estimate,) to what has been expended by his country in investing, battering, undermining, burning, taking, and perhaps retaking, one particu-

lar foreign town, in one or several campaigns.

If he should perchance be sarcastically questioned, how he can allow himself in so strange a conceit as that of supposing such a quantity of moral forces concentrated to act in one exclusive spot, while the rest of the country remained under the old course of things; or in such an absurdity as that of fancying that *any* quantity of those forces could effectually raise one local section of the people eminently aloft, while continuing surrounded and unavoidably in constant intercourse with the general mass, remaining still sunk in degradation—he has to reply, that he is fancying no such thing. For while he is thus converting, in imagination, the military exertions against one foreign town, into intellectual and moral operations on one town at home, why may he not, in similar imagination, make a whole country correspond to a whole country? He may conceive the grand, the incalculable amount of exertion made by his country in martial operations over all that wide foreign territory of which he has selected a particular spot, to have been, on the contrary, expended in the supposed beneficent process on the great scale of this whole nation. Then would the hypothetical improvement in the one particular town, so far from

being a strange insulated phenomenon, absurd to be conceived as existing in exception and total contrast to the general state of the people, be but a portion and specimen of that state.

He may proceed along the series of such confronted representations as far as bitter mortification will let him. But he will soon be sick of this process of comparison. And how sick will he thenceforward be, to perpetual loathing, of the vain raptures with which an immoral and anti-christian patriotism can review a long history of what it will call national glory, acquired by national energy ambitiously consuming itself in a continual succession and unlimited extent of extraneous operations, of that kind which has been the grand curse of the human race ever since the time of Cain ; while the one thing needful of national welfare, the very *summum bonum* of a state, has been regarded with contemptuous indifference.

These observations are not made on an assumption, that England could in all cases have kept clear of implication in foreign interests, and remote and sanguinary contests. But they are made on the assumption of what is admitted and deplored by every thoughtful religious man, whose understanding and moral

señse are not wretchedly prostrated in homage to a prevailing system, and chained down by a superstition that dares not question the wisdom and probity of high national authorities and counsels. What is so admitted and deplored by the true and christian patriots is, that this nation has gone to an awfully criminal extent beyond the line of necessity ; that it has been extremely prompt to find occasions for appearing again, and still again, in array for the old work of waste and death ; and that, taking into the account the high advantage enjoyed by its preponderating classes for forming a religious judgment, it has shewn, during several generations and down into our age, an astonishing insensibility to the dictates of christianity and the warning of accountableness to the Sovereign Judge.

These observations assume, too, with perfect confidence, that there CANNOT be, in the christian world, any such thing as a nation habitually absolved from the duty of raising its people from brutish ignorance, in consideration of a necessity and duty of expending its vigour and means in foreign enterprize. The concern of redeeming the people from a besotted condition of their reason and conscience, is a duty at all events and to an entire certainty ; is a duty imperative and absolute ; and any pretended necessity for

such a direction of the national exertion as would be, through a long succession of time, incompatible with a paramount attention to this, must be an imposition too gross to furnish an excuse for being imposed on. It would be a virtual denial of the superintendence of Providence. It would be the same thing as to assert of an individual, that his duties of other kinds are so many and so great, as to render it impossible for him to give a competent attention to his highest interests.

Such as we have described has been, for ages, the degraded state of the multitude. And such has been the indifference manifested in regard to it by the superior, the refined, the ascendent portion of the community; who, generally speaking, could see these sharers with them of the dishonoured human nature, in endless numbers around them, in the city and the field, without its ever flashing on conscience that on them was lying a solemn accountableness, destined to press one day with all its weight, for that ill arrangement of the social order which excluded these beings from the sphere of rational existence. It never occurred to many of them as a question of the smallest moment, in what manner the mind might be living in all these bodies, if only it were there in com-

petence to make them efficient as machines and implements. Contented to be gazed at, to be envied, or to be regarded as too high even for envy, and to have the rough business of the world performed by these inhalers of the vital air, they perhaps thought, if they reflected at all on the subject, that the best and most privileged state of such beings was to be in the least possible degree morally responsible; and that therefore it would be but doing them an injury to enlarge their knowledge. And might not the thought be suggested at some moment, (see how many things may be envied in their turns!) how happy *they* should be, if with the vast superiority of their advantages they could be just as little accountable? But not even when the unwelcome fact of their own great accountableness struck them by a reflected thought from the very view of this subordinate tribe, not even then was it suggested to them, that they should ever be arraigned on a charge to which they would vainly wish to be permitted to plead, “Were we our brothers’ keepers?” And if an office designated in those terms had been named to them, as a part of their duty, by some voice coming to them in accents of mysterious power, their thoughts might have traversed hither and thither, in various conjectures and protracted perplexity,

before the objects of that office had been presented explicitly to their apprehension as no other than the reason, principles, consciences, and the whole moral condition of the vulgar mass.—We repeat that we speak generally, and not universally.

But we think a great revolution is evidently beginning; a more important one, by its higher principle and its expansive impulse toward a wide and remote beneficence, than the ordinary events of that name. What have commonly been the matter and circumstance of revolutions? The last deciding blow in a deadly competition of equally selfish parties; actions and re-actions of ambition and revenge; the fiat of a predominating potentate or conqueror; a burst of blind fury, suddenly sweeping away an old despotism, but overwhelming too all attempts to substitute a better institution; plots, massacres, battles, dethronements, restorations: all ordinary things. How little of the sublime of moral agency has there been, with one or two partial exceptions, in these mighty commotions; how little wisdom or virtue, or reference to the Supreme Patron of national interests; how little nobleness or even distinctness of purpose, or consolidated advantage of success! But here is a revolution with different phenomena. It displays its quality and pro-

ject in activities, of continually enlarging scope and power, for the universal diffusion of the divine revelation; in enterprizes to attempt an opening of the doors of all the immense prison-houses of human spirits in every region; in schemes, (more speedily animated into practical operation, and faster widened as they advance, than good designs were wont to be in former times,) for rendering education and the possession of valuable knowledge general; in multiplying exertions, in all official and unofficial forms, for making it impossible to mankind to avoid hearing the voice of religion: and all this taking advantage of the new and powerful movement in the general mind; as earnest bold adventurers have sometimes availed themselves of a formidable torrent, to be conveyed whither the stream in its accustomed state would never have carried them; or as we have heard of heroic assailants seizing the moment of an awful tempest of thunder and lightning, to break through the enemy's lines.—These are the insignia by which it may well express disdain to take its rank with ordinary revolutions.

Do these appear but a feeble array to be recounted as the signs and forces of a great revolution, to the mere political projectors who are speculating on this same object, of meliorating

the state and character of the people? At hearing such things named, are they astonished or amused to think how every sort of feeble and beguiled understanding can please itself with its own fancies or the beguiler's illusions? They are reminded, perhaps, of Glendower's grave and earnest talk of calling up spirits from the deep; or of the people who seized, in honest credulous delight, the mockery of the suggestion of pulling a city, to the last small stone, into the river with ropes, as a prime stroke of statesmanship and generalship. But then we might ask them, And in what manner do *you* coolly make out, in your schemes for a grand amendment of the popular condition, the sufficiency of any mere political expedients, in comparison of which you despise these intellectual, moral, and religious forces? As a preliminary point, how are you to *obtain*, (if your theory of an improved state of the people require that there be obtained in the *first instance*,) any great political changes in their favour? In what manner can you promise yourselves to bring into effect a theory, that should presume a hasty concession of privileges to the people by the superior orders of the community, while those orders have to allege in justification of refusal, that the people are so ignorant, and so exceedingly corrupt, as to be totally unfit

for the possession of such privileges, even supposing them, abstractedly speaking, their right?

But suppose the leading classes did *not* refuse any one thing you would ask, for reducing your theory to practice, or to experiment. Suppose the people instated in the fulness of what you would deem the privileges rightfully appropriate to their situation in the community; placed on just such a ground in the great political arrangement as you would wish to claim and vindicate for them, in order to raise them, as you think, to respectability and happiness. Suppose them placed there at this moment; and what then? How,—through what mode of the salutary effect of this change,—are the felicitous consequences to follow? You know, yes, you absolutely know, that a vast majority of the multitude are, at this hour, as wretchedly ignorant and corrupt as they have been represented by those who are, and not unjustly, regarded as their enemies. Hardly any language on this subject can exceed the melancholy truth. Nor can any thing on earth be more contemptible than that strain of talking which affects a confidence in their present enlightened judgment, their steady principles, their well ordered dispositions, and so forth; and which, in addressing them, multiplies phrases of de-

ference, and makes a kind of boasting in their name, as if in them were to be found nearly all that exists of sterling worth in the land. It is but an incipient and exceedingly partial appearance of transformation that the most sanguine of us can, as yet, profess to perceive as the result of all the new and augmenting moral forces in recent times brought into operation; so inveterate, so obdurate, so profound in evil, is that popular condition which is attempted to be corrected. The great mass is still most deplorably corrupt. And yet you really can, notwithstanding, place it, in imagination, under some *merely* political auspicious adjustment which shall act upon it with a more immediate and powerful efficacy of correction, than any alterative influence of better education and inculcated religion. But how? Through the medium of what principles? Think in what terms you shall name these *merely* political vitalities, so mighty for a moral regeneration. Would you, perhaps, talk of the dignified sense of independence; the generous, the liberalizing, the ennobling sentiments of freedom; the self-respect, and conscious responsibility, of men in the full exercise of their rights; the manly disdain of what is base; and the innate sense and love of what is worthy and honourable, which would spontaneously develop itself on the removal

of certain ungenial circumstances in the political constitution of society, which have had the effect of winter on the moral nature of its inferior portions? It would be difficult to believe that you could find all this listened to with gravity, as the veritable description of an order of sentiments to be brought into action in a rude mass of humanity, without wishing, for amusement's sake, to see the whole capacity of such credence tried by some reciter of popish miracles, or some pretender to make a mere sport of the absolute laws of nature by charms of necromancy.

But perhaps you will say, that your scheme for the desired renovation of the state and character of the people, is *not* exclusively political. Your chief power, you own, your Hercules in the operations for placing them on a happier ground, is indeed to be a highly improved form of the political framing together of the national community; because in the attainment of this there would be an end of many bad impressions now strongly and habitually affecting the people, and the commencement of as many salutary influences, to come upon them with a direct immediate action, and an action not merely affecting a proportion of them as individuals, but falling on them generally as one great body. They would thus be all growing better together,

almost without knowing how. A grand change of the climate would improve the general health, whether regimen and physic were attended to or neglected. This, you think, would be such a mighty and comprehensive advantage, that it must stand primary in a rational scheme for the great purpose. Give it this just predominance, you will say, and then, when you come to take account of the subordinate and subsidiary means, to follow in detail, under this chief improver of the people, you do not fail to set a high value on plans of education, and efforts for diffusing knowledge and religion; you are even never imagining the possibility of the full accomplishment of the object without the assistance of these means: they are always *included* in your speculation, though accounted in it as secondary and instrumental, under the paramount importance of what you must still insist on placing first. Do you say so? Then confess that those persons are right at all events, who are zealous to bring into operation immediately the expedients thus admitted by yourselves to be indispensable somewhere in the process; who will do it as *so much gained at any rate*, in despite of the reluctance of the economy around them to dispose itself into an order, under which the beneficent design might have a greater power and more rapid

efficacy. Whatever order of things you would conceive as the most propitious to the improvement of the people, what would that improvement itself consist in, for its most valuable part, but exactly that which is endeavoured to be imparted *now* by the men who will not wait for the fortunate aspects and conjunctions of your political astrology? We should say, which *is* imparted by them; for they find, notwithstanding all that has been left undone for the popular welfare in the political system, that in some measure their scheme for infusing that best improvement *can* be brought in contact with the mind of the humbler order, in its juvenile portion; and that already, as from the garment of the Redeemer, a sanative virtue goes out of it. And shall they despise this measure of utility, just because it bears upon it the honour of having been effected in defiance of an inauspicious national economy, or because they can imagine how much greater it might have been under a benignant one? They acknowledge with regret the exceedingly limited reach and force of their operations, as compared with the immensity of the assemblage of intellectual and moral existence requiring to be operated upon. They will perfectly agree with you, that every thing in the constitution of a state *should* be so adjusted that

the main force of that state should bear on this great object. But at the same time, who are the truer friends of the people,—they, who find an intrinsic value in such means as there are, in the absence of whatever means there are not, and actively exert themselves that the people may be the better *so far*; or you, who rate all means as but cyphers unless a certain favourite one be at their head; and seem almost content that, till it *shall* be there, the people should remain just as they are for mere evidence that no scheme but yours can do them good?

But some of those persons who, whenever they think of great plans of utility to a nation, inevitably think also of that which directs the nation's organized strength, and of the forms of institution, and of the prevailing spirit, according to which that strength is made to act,—will plead, that they really are not laying any such mighty emphasis on specific circumstances wrong in the political arrangement; that it is not from this or that particular formal correction of institutions, that they are imagining, in melancholy musings, how much good might flow to pour life and vigour into the process for reforming and exalting the people. They say, that though they may consider various things in the political mechanism partially or wholly wrong,

the weight of their reproach against the institutions and administrators of states falls on them in a more general form; it rests on the grand fact, most conspicuous in the past and present view of the world, that they do never, in the plenitude of their power, actually produce the effect of saving the people from a wretched mental degradation, nor seriously exert that power with this intention. It is, they say, on this enormous practical failure that they dwell, with such deep displacency, rather than on precise defects in the construction of states, theoretically considered. And then they confess, that the contemplation of this fact, with so slender a hope as they are permitted to indulge of its being soon reversed, has the effect of reducing almost to folly, in their view, the little schemes and efforts of individuals directed toward such an object.

Now we earnestly wish it might be granted by the Almighty, that the political institutions of the nations should speedily take a form, and come under an administration, that *would* apply the energy of the state to so sublime a purpose; nor can we imagine any test of their merits so fair as the question whether, and in what degree, they do this; nor of course any test by which they may more naturally decline to have those merits tried.

But since, to the shame of our nature, there is no use to which we are so prone to turn our condemnation of evil in one form, as that of purchasing a license for it in another, the persons now in our view should be warned that they do not take from the awful omissions of states a sanction for individuals to do nothing. Let them not suffer an imposition on their minds in the notion entertained of a state or nation. Let them examine it, and they will acknowledge, that though a nation does subsist in a certain collective capacity, which goes into effect in its government; and though its agency in this capacity and by this organ (according to any existing mode of constituting a government) may justly be considered as distinct from the will of individuals and independent of them *to some undefined degree*; yet still, the habitual tenour of the conduct of a civilized and thinking nation, year after year and age after age, must be, *to some very great degree*, the conduct of the individuals composing it,—a conduct in pursuance of their will, and for which as individuals they stand accountable. For a will of different direction, in the generality of the informed individuals, accompanied with a corresponding action as far as that will could be carried into effect, must evidently cause a vast difference in that collective action which

might be denominated the national conduct. It would do so, though the men in the formal exercise of the powers of government should be supposed to refuse their concurrence with so prevailing a will. It would do so, even in spite of the grievous circumstance (were such a thing in that case possible) that they had the power and resolution to pervert the application of a large share of the national resources to useless or pernicious purposes. The neglect, therefore, of the improvement of the people, so glaring in the review of our conduct as a nation, has been, to a very great extent, the insensibility of individuals to obligations lying on them as such, independently of the political conformation of the state.

And are individuals *now* absolved from all such responsibility; and the more so, that the conviction of the importance of the object is come upon them with such a new and mighty force? When they say, reproachfully, that the nation in its collective capacity, as a body politic, neglects a most important duty, is it to be understood that this accusatory testimony is *their* share, or something equivalent in substitution for their share, of that very duty? Does a collective duty, of such very solid substance, vanish into nothing under any attempted process of resolving it into fractions and particles for individuals? And

do they themselves, as some of the beings to whom this duty might thus be distributively assigned,—do they themselves, in spite of self-love, self-estimation, and all the sentiments which they will at other times indulge in homage of their own importance,—do they, when this assignment is attempted to be made, instantly and willingly surrender to a feeling of dissolving from this proud individuality into an undistinguishable existence in the mass, and, profaning the language of religion, say to the State, “In thee we live, move, and have a being?” Or, (in assimilation to eastern pagans, who hold that the gods so pervade them as to be their wills and do their actions, leaving this quantity of mere vehicle without power, duty, or accountableness,) will they account themselves but as passive matter, actuated and necessitated in all things by a sovereign mythological something denominated the State?

No, not in all things. It is not so that they feel with respect to those other interests and projects, which they are really in earnest to promote, though those concerns may lie in no greater proportion than the one in question does within the scope of their individual ability. The incubus has then vanished; and they find themselves in possession of a free agency, and a degree of power which they

will not patiently hear estimated in any such contemptuous terms. What is there then that should reduce them, as individual agents, to such utter and willing insignificance in the affair of which we are speaking? Besides, they may form themselves, in indefinite number, into combination. And is there no power in any collective form in which they can be associated, save just that one in which the aggregation is constituted under the political shape and authority denominated a state? Or does the matter come at last to this, that they grow alarmed in conscience at the high-toned censure they have been stimulated and betrayed to pronounce on the state, for neglect of its greatest duty; that they relapse into the obsequiousness of hesitating, whether they should attempt to do good of a kind which that high agent has left undone; that they must wait for the sanction of its great example; that till the "shout of kings is among them" it were better not to march against the vandalism and the paganism which are, the while, quite at their ease, destroying the people?

But if this had always been the way in which private individuals, single or associated, had accounted of themselves and their possible exertions, in regard to great general improvements, but very few would ever have

been accomplished. For the case has commonly been, that the schemes of such improvements have originated with persons not invested with political power; have been urged on by the accession and cooperation of such individuals; and at length slowly and reluctantly acceded to by the holders of dominion over the community, the last persons to admit what had long appeared to the majority of thinking men no less than demonstrative evidence of the propriety and advantage of the reformation.

In all probability, the improvement of mankind is destined, under Divine Providence, to advance just in proportion as good men feel the responsibility for it resting on themselves *as individuals*, and are actuated by a bold sentiment of independence, (humble, at the same time, in reference to the necessity of a celestial agency,) in the prosecution of it. Each person who is standing still to look, with grief or indignation, at the evils which are overrunning the world, would do well to recollect what he may have read of some gallant partizan, who, perceiving where a prompt movement, with the force at his own command, would make an impression infallibly tending to the success of the warfare, could not endure to lose the time till some great sultan should find it convenient to come

in slow march, and the pomp of state, to take on him the general direction of the campaign.

In laying this emphasis of incitement and hope on the exertions of good men as individuals, we cannot, after what has been said with so much repetition, be understood to mean that the governments of states, if once they were to be in earnest for rendering the condition of society better and happier, could not contribute beyond all calculation to the force and efficacy of *every* project and measure for that grand purpose. It is because their history, thus far, affords such feeble prognostics of their becoming, till some better age, actuated by such a spirit,—it is because the Divine Governor has hitherto put upon them so little of the honour of being the instruments of his beneficence,—that the anticipations of good, and the exhortations to attempt it, are so peculiarly directed to its promoters in an individual capacity.

Happily, the accusatory part of such exhortations is becoming every day of more limited application; and we return with pleasure to the animating idea of that revolution of which we were noting the introductory signs. It is a revolution in the manner of estimating the souls of the people, and consequently in the judgment of what should be

done for their welfare. Through many ages, that immense multitude had been but obscurely presented to view in the character of rational, improvable creatures. They were recognised but as one large mass, of equivocal moral substance, but faintly distinguishable into individuals ; a breadth of insignificant sameness, undiscernible in marked features and aspects of mental character ; existing, and to be left to exist, in their own manner ; and that manner hardly worth concern or inquiry. Little consideration could there be of how much spiritual immortal essence might be going to waste, while this multitude was reduced to this kind of collective nothingness on the field of contemplation. But now it is as if a mist were rising and dispersing from that field, and leaving this mighty assemblage of spiritual beings exhibited to view in such a light from heaven as they were never beheld in before, except by the eyes of Apostles, and of a small number that in every age have resembled them.

It is true, this manifestation forms so melancholy a vision, that if we had only to behold it *as a spectacle*, we might well desire that the misty obscurity should descend upon it again, to shroud it from sight ; while we should be left to indulge and elate our imaginations by dwelling on the pomps and splendours of the

terrestrial scene,—the mighty empires, the heroes, the victories, the triumphs ; the refinements and enjoyments of the most highly cultivated of the race ; the brilliant performances of genius, and the astonishing reach of science. So the tempter would have beguiled our Lord into a complacent contemplation of the kingdoms and glories of the world. But he was come to look on a different aspect of it ! Nor could he be withdrawn from the gloomy view of its degradation and misery. And a good reason why. For the sole object for which he had appeared in the only world where temptation could even in form approach him, was to begin in operation, and finish in virtue, a design for changing that state of degradation and misery. In the prosecution of such a design, and in the spirit of that divine benevolence in which it sprung, he could endure to fix on the melancholy and odious character of the scene, the contemplation which was vainly attempted to be diverted to any other of its aspects. What, indeed, could sublunary pomps and glories be to him in any case ; but emphatically what, when his object was to redeem the people from darkness and destruction ? Those who, actuated by a spirit in some remote resemblance to His, have entered deeply into the state of the people, such as it is found

in our own nation, have often been appalled at the spectacle disclosed to them. They have been astonished to think what *can* have been the direction, while successive ages have passed away, of so many thousands of acute and vigilant mental eyes, that so dreadful a sight should scarcely have been descried. They have been aware that in describing it as they actually saw it, they would be regarded by some as gloomy fanatics, tinctured with insanity by the influence of some austere creed; and that others, of kinder nature, but whose sensibility has more of self-indulging refinement than tendency to active benevolence, would almost wish that so revolting an exhibition had never been made, though the fact be actually so. There may have been moments when even they themselves have experienced a temporary recoil of their benevolent zeal, under the impression at once of the immensity of the evil and its grievously offensive quality. At times, the rudeness of the subjects, and perhaps the ungracious reception and thankless requital of their philanthropic labours, aggravating the general feeling of the miserableness, (so to express it,) of seeing so much misery, have lent seduction to the temptations to ease and self-indulgence. Why should *they*, just they of all men, condemn themselves to dwell so much in the

most dreary climate of the moral world, when they could perhaps have taken their almost constant abode in a little elysium of elegant knowledge, taste, and refined society? Then was the time to revert to the example of him “who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor.”

Or, again, their thoughts may not unfrequently be turned on that view of things, which we have described as so habitual, and of such withering effect, with men who speculate on benevolence with but little of its spirit. They may have dwelt too long on the consideration, of how much the higher and more amply furnished powers leave such generous designs to proceed as they can, in the mere strength of private individual exertion. And they may have yielded to gloomy and repressive feelings after the fervour of indignant ones: for indignation, unless animated by a very sanctified principle, is very apt, when it cools, to become despondency. It is as if, (they have said,) armies and giants would stand aloof to amuse themselves, while we are to be committed and abandoned in the ceaseless toil of a conflict, which these armies and giants have no business even to exist as such but for the very purpose of waging. We are, if we will,—and if we will we may let it alone—to try to effect in diminutive pieces,

and detached local efforts, a little share of that, to the accomplishment of which the greatest human force on earth might be applied on system, and to the widest compass. — So they have said, perhaps, and been tempted to leave their object to its destiny.

But really it is now too late for this resentful and desponding abandonment. They cannot now retire in the tragical dignity of despair. It must be a matter more forlorn that would admit of their saying, as in parody or travesty of Cato, "Witness heaven and earth, we have done our duty, but the stars and fate are against us; and here it becomes us to terminate a strife, which would degenerate into the ridiculous if prosecuted against impossibilities." On the contrary, the zeal which could begin so onerous a work, and prosecute it thus far, could not now remit without betraying its past ardour to the reproach and ridicule due to a vain caprice. Is it for the projectors of a noble edifice for public utility, to abandon the undertaking when it has risen from its foundation to be seen above the ground; or is just come to be level with the surface of the waters, in defiance of which it has been commenced, and the violence of which it was designed to control, or the unfordable depths

and streams of which it was to bear people over? Let the promoters of education and christian knowledge among the inferior classes, reflect what has already been accomplished; regarding it, we once again repeat, as quite the incipient stage. It is most truly as yet "the day of small things;" but let them recount the individuals whom, nevertheless, they have seen rescued from what had all the signs of a destination to the lowest debasement, and utter ruin; some of whom are returning animated thanks, and will do so in the hour of death, for what these, their best human friends, have been the means of imparting to them. Let them recollect of how many families they have seen the domestic condition pleasingly, and in some instances eminently and delightfully amended. And let them reflect how they have trampled down prejudices, greatly silenced a heathenish clamour, and provoked the imitative and rival efforts of many who would, but for them, have been most cordially willing for all such schemes to lie in abeyance to the end of time. Let them think of all this, and then go on and try, (we speak reverently,) what God and they can do, whether the authorities that govern the nations will or will not lend their powers vigorously in aid; whether, when the infinite importance of the concern is represented

to them, they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

But let them not fear that the time will come, when the rulers and the ascendent classes in states will comprehend it to be their best policy to promote all possible improvement of the people. It will be given to them to understand, that the highest glory of those at the head of great communities, must consist in the eminence attained by those communities generally, in whatever it is that constitutes the most valuable and honourable superiority of one man or class over others. They will one day have learnt to esteem it a far nobler form of power to *lead* an immense combination of intelligent minds, than to command and coerce a great aggregation of brute force. They will come to feel, that it is better for them to have a people who can understand and rationally approve, if deserving of approbation, their system and measures, than one bent in stupid submission, even if prolonged ignorance could suffice to retain the people in that posture; better, therefore, by the still stronger reason, than to have one fermenting in ignorant disaffection, constantly believing the governors to be in the wrong, and without the sense to comprehend any arguments in justification, excepting such as might be addressed in the shape of bribes to

corruption. And a time will come, when it will not be left to the philanthropic speculators alone, to make the comparative estimate between what has been effected by the enormously expensive apparatus of coercive and penal administration,—the prisons, prosecutions, transportations, and a vast military police,—and what *might* have been effected by one half of that expenditure devoted to popular reformation, to be accomplished by means of schools, and every practicable variety of methods for placing men's judgment and conscience as the "lion in the way," when they are inclined and tempted to go wrong.—All this will come to pass at length. And if the promoters of the best designs see cause to fear that the time is remote, this should but enforce upon them the more strongly the admonition that no time is *theirs*, but the present.

It was not possible to pursue the long course of these observations so nearly to the conclusion, without having been many times reminded, that there will be persons ready to impute sanguine extravagance to our expectations of the result of such an order of means and exertions for the improvement of the education and mental condition of the people, as we see already coming into operation; we mean, the many schools, which have had

their origin, and thus far their support, in free benevolence; the much more numerous attendance on the public ministrations of religion, themselves too in a progress of reformation and enlargement; and that increased reading for which we trust that the schools and public instructions will both inspire and correct the taste. When the means are of so little splendid a quality, it will be said, by what inflation of fancy is their power admeasured to such effects?

And what *is* it, then, how much is it, we ask, that the advocates of the system profess to anticipate? Are they heard maintaining that the communication of knowledge, or true notions of things, to youthful minds, will *infallibly* ensure their virtue and happiness? They are not quite so new to the world, to experimental labours in the business of tuition, or to self-observation. Their vigilance would hardly overlook such a circumstance as the very different degree of assurance with which the effects may be predicted of ignorance on the one hand, and of knowledge on the other. There is very nearly an absolute certainty of success in the method for making clowns, sots, vagabonds, and ruffians. You may safely leave it to themselves to carry on the process for becoming complete. Let human creatures grow up without discipline, des-

stitute therefore of salutary information, sound judgment, or any conscience but what will shape itself to whatever they like, and serve in the manner of some vile friar pander in the old plays,—and no one thinks of taking any credit for foresight in saying they will be a noxious burden on the earth; except indeed in those tracts of it where they seem to have their appropriate place and business, in being matched against the wolves and bears of the wilderness. When they infest what should be a civilized and christianized part of the world, the philanthropist is sometimes put in doubt whether to repress, or indulge, the sentiment which tempts him to complacency in the operations of an epidemic which is thinning their numbers.

The consequences of ignorance are certain, unless almost a miracle interpose; but unhappily those of knowledge are of diffident and restricted calculation; unless we could make a trifle of the testimony of all ages, and suppress the evidence of present experience, that men may see and approve the better, and yet follow the worse. It is the hapless predicament of our nature, that the noblest of its powers, the understanding, has but imperfectly and precariously that commanding hold on the others, which is essential to the good order of the soul. Our constitution is

like a machine in which there is a constant liability of the secondary wheels to be thrown out of the catch and grapple of the master one. And worse than so, these powers which ought to be subordinate and obedient to the understanding, are not left to stand still when detached from its control. They have a strong activity of their own, from the impulse of other principles: indeed, it is this impulse that *causes* the detachment. It is really frightful to look at the evidence from facts, that these active powers *may* grow strong in the perversity which will set the judgment at defiance, during the very time that it is successfully training to a competence for dictating to them what is right. The assertions of those who are determined to find the grand cause of the depraved action of the passions and will in misapprehension of the understanding, are a gross assumption, in a question of fact, against an infinite crowd of facts pressing round with their evidence. This evidence is offered by men without number distinctly and deliberately avowing their conviction of the evil quality, and fatal consequences, of courses which they are soon afterwards seen pursuing, and without the smallest pretence of a change of opinion; by the same men in more advanced stages still owning the same conviction, and sometimes in strong terms of

self-reproach, in the checks and pauses of their career; and by men in the near prospect of death and judgment expressing, in bitter regret, the acknowledgment that they had persisted in acting wrong while they knew better. And this assumption so wilfully made against such evidence, is to be maintained for no better reason, that appears, than that human nature cannot, must not, shall not, be so absurd and depraved as to be capable of such madness. As if human nature were taking the smallest trouble to put on any disguise before them, to beguile them into a good opinion; as if it would be cajoled by their flattery to assume even a semblance of deserving it; as if it had the complaisance to check any one bad propensity, that they may not stand contradicted and exposed to ridicule for speaking of it with indulgence or respect; as if it staid or cared to thank them for their pains in attempting to make out a plausible extenuation. It has, and keeps, and shews its character, without the leave of those who would resolve its moral turpitude into error in the understanding. But, as for understanding—it should be time to take care of their own, when they find themselves asserting, in other words, that there is actually as much virtue in the world as there is knowledge of its principles. We should rather have surmised that, deplorably

deficient as that knowledge is, the reduction of it all to practice would make a glorious change in England and Europe.

The persons, therefore, whose zeal is combined with knowledge in the prosecution of plans for the extension of education, proceed on a calculation of an effect more limited, in apparent proportion to the means, and less positively, (even in that more limited measure,) to be reckoned on in a given single instance, than they would have been justified in anticipating in many other departments of operation. They would, for example, predict with more confidence the results of an undertaking to cultivate any tract of waste land, or to reclaim a bog, or to render mechanical forces and contrivance available in a difficult untried mode of application; or, in many cases, the successful results of the application of the healing art to diseased body. They still remember what moral nature they are calculating on, and calculating *for good*. And in their more gloomy moments they perhaps fall into a comparison of *their* calculation on it for good, with that which an enemy of mankind might please himself in making on it for evil; both the calculations being supposed to keep in view this fact of the very imperfect command of the judgment over the active powers of the mind, and to be

made with respect to the same selection of human beings. In some such moments they would be glad of an exchange between the respective degrees of probability attached to these two schemes of anticipation. That is to say, let a man, if such there be, who could be pleased with the depravity and misery of the race, a sagacious judge too, of their moral constitution, and a veteran observer of their conduct,—let him survey with the look of an evil spirit a hundred children in one of the benevolent schools, and indulge himself in prognosticating, on the strength of the fact to which we have adverted, the proportion, in numbers and degree, in which these children will, in subsequent life, exemplify the *failure* of what is done for their wisdom and welfare ;—let him make his calculation, and, we say, there may be times when the friends of these institutions would be glad to transfer the quantity of probability from his side to theirs ; would feel they should be happy if the proportion in which they fear he may be right in calculating on evil from the nature of the beings under discipline, were, instead, the proportion in which it is rational to reckon on good from the efficacy of that discipline. “ Evil be thou my good,” might be involuntarily the expression, in the sense of a wish that the colossal form of power in

which the former stands before them could be retained, with only an expiration of its actuating principle, to be replaced by the spirit of the latter.

But we shall know where to stop in the course of observations of this darkening colour; and shall take off the point of the derider's taunt, just forthcoming, that we are here unsaying, in effect, all that we have been so laboriously urging about the value and indispensable necessity of knowledge to the people. It was proper to shew, that the prosecutors of these designs are not suffering themselves to be duped out of a perception of what there is in the nature of the youthful subjects to counteract the intention of the discipline, and with an absolute power to limit its efficacy to a very partial measure of the effect desired. These projectors might fairly be required to prove they are not unknowing enthusiasts; but then, in keeping clear of the vain extravagances of hope, they are not to surrender their confidence that something great and important can be done: it should be possible for a man to be sober, short of being dead. They are not to gravitate into a state of feeling as if the understanding and the moral powers were things but casually associated in the mind; as if an important communication to the one, might, so to speak,

never be heard of by the others ; as if these subordinates had just one sole principle of action,—that of disobeying their chief, so that it could be of no use to appeal to the master of the house respecting the conduct of his inmates ; as if, therefore, all presumption of a relation between means and ends, as a ground of confidence in the efficacy of popular instruction, must be illusory. It might not indeed be amiss for them to be *told* that the case is so, by those who would desire, from whatever motive, to repress their efforts and defeat their designs. For, so downright a blow at the vital principle of their favourite object, would but serve to provoke them to a determined exercise of thought to ascertain more definitely what there really is for them to form their schemes and calculations upon, and therefore to verify to themselves the reasons they have for persisting, in confidence that the labour will not be lost. And the instant they apply themselves, in this severe sobriety, to the estimates, they have the fact conspicuous before them, that there is at any rate such an efficacy in cultivation, that it is quite certain a well cultivated people *cannot* remain on the same degraded moral level as a neglected ignorant one,—or any where near it. None of those even that value such designs the least, ever pretend to foresee, in the event of

their having taken effect, an undiminished prevalence of rudeness and brutality of manners, of delight in spectacles and amusements of cruelty, of noisy revelry, of sottish intemperance, or of disregard of character. It is not pretended to be foreseen, that the poorer classes will then continue to display so much of that heedless and almost desperate improvidence respecting their temporal means and prospects, which has aggravated the calamities of the present times. It is not predicted that an universal school-discipline will bring up several millions to the neglect, and many of them in an impudent contempt, of attendance on the ministrations of religion. The result will at all hazards, by every one's acknowledgment, be *the contrary of all this.*

But more specifically:—The promoters of the plans of popular education see a most important advantage gained in the very outset, and as perhaps the smallest matter in the account of emolument, in the obvious fact, that in their schools a very large portion of time is employed well, that otherwise would infallibly be employed ill. Let any one introduce himself into one of these places of concourse, where there has been time to mature the arrangements into the most efficient system. He should not enter as an important personage, in patronizing and judicial state, to de-

mand the respectful looks of the whole tribe from their attention to their printed rudiments and their slates ; but glide in as a quiet observer, just to survey at his leisure the character and operations of the scene. Undoubtedly he will descry here and there the signs of inattention, weariness, or vacancy, not to say of perverseness. Even these individuals, however, are out of the way of practical harm ; and at the same time he will see a multitude of youthful spirits acknowledging the duty of directing their best attention to something altogether foreign to their wild amusements ; of making a protracted effort in one mode or another of the strange business of *thinking*. He will perceive in many the unequivocal indications of a serious and earnest effort made to acquire, with the aid of visible signs and implements, a command of what is invisible and immaterial. They are thus rising from the mere animal state to tread in the precincts of an intellectual economy ; the economy of thought and truth, in which they are to live for ever ; and never, to eternity, will they have to regret *this* period and part of their employments. He will be delighted to think how many regulated actions of the mind, how many just ideas, distinctly admitted, that were unknown at the beginning of the day's exercise, (and among these ideas,

some to remind them of God and their highest interest,)—there will have been by the time the busy and well ordered company breaks up in the evening, and leaves silence within these walls. He will not indeed grow romantic in hope; he knows the nature of which these beings partake; knows therefore that the desired results of this process will but partially follow; but still rejoices to think those partial results which will most certainly follow, will be worth incomparably more than all they will have cost.

Now let him, when he has contemplated this scene, consider how the greatest part of this numerous company *would* have been employed during the same hours, (whether of the sabbath or other days,) but for such a provision of means for their instruction. And, for the contrast, he has only to leave the school, and walk a mile round the neighbourhood, in which it will be very wonderful, (we may say this of most parts of England,) if he shall not, in a populous district and on a fine day, meet with a great number of wretched disgusting imps, straggling or in knots, in the activity of mischief and nuisance, or at least the full cry of vile and profane language; with here and there, as a lord among them, an elder larger one growing fast into an insolent blackguard. He may make

the comparison, quite sure that such as they are, and so employed, would many now under the salutary discipline of yonder school have been, but for its institution. But the two classes, so beheld in contrast,—might they not seem to belong to two different nations? Do they not seem growing into two extremely different orders of character? Do they not even seem preparing for different worlds in the final distribution?

The friends of these designs for a general and highly improved education, may proceed further in this course of verifying to themselves the grounds of their assurance of happy consequences. A number of ideas decidedly the most important that were ever formed in human thought, or imparted from the Supreme Mind, will be so taught in these institutions, that it is absolutely certain they will be fixed irrevocably and for ever in the minds of many of the pupils. It will be as impossible to erase these ideas from their memories as to extinguish the stars. And in the case of many, perhaps the majority, of these youthful beings, advancing into the temptations of life, these grand ideas, thus fixed deep in their souls, will distinctly present themselves to judgment and conscience an incalculable number of times. What a number, if the sum of all these reminiscences, in all the minds

now assembled in a numerous school, could be conjectured! But if one in a hundred of these recollections, if one in a thousand, shall have the efficacy that it ought to have, who can compute the amount of the good resulting from the instruction which shall have so enforced and fixed these ideas that they shall infallibly be thus recollected? And is it altogether out of reason to hope that the desired efficacy will, as often as once in a thousand times, attend the luminous rising again of a solemn idea to the view of the mind? Is still less than *this* to be hoped for our unhappy nature, and that too while a beneficent God has the superintendence of it?

The institutions themselves will gradually improve in both the manner and the compass of their discipline. They will acquire a more vigorous mechanism, and a more decidedly intellectual character. In this latter respect, it is but comparatively of late years that schools for the inferior classes have ventured any thing beyond the humblest pretensions. Mental cultivation—exercise of the judgment—habit of thinking—advantage of knowledge—almost the word Education itself—were terms which they were to be reverently cautious of taking in vain. There would have been an offensive sound in such phrases, as seeming to betray somewhat of the im-

pertinence of a *disposition*, (for the idea of the *practicability* of any such invasion would have been scorned,) to encroach on a ground exclusively appropriate to the superior orders. Schools for the poor were to be as little as possible scholastic. They were to have every possible assimilation to the workshop, excepting perhaps in one particular,—that of working hard: for the scholars were literally to throw time away rather than be occupied with any thing beyond the merest rudiments. The advocates and the petitioners for aid of such schools, were to avow and plead how little it was that they pretended or presumed to teach. The argument in their behalf was either to begin or end with saying, that they taught *only* reading and writing; or, if it could not be denied that there was to be some meddling with the first rules of arithmetic,—we may safely appeal to some of these pleaders, whether they did not, twenty or thirty years since, bring out this addition with the management and hesitation of a confession and apology. It is a prominent characteristic of that happy revolution we have spoken of as in commencement, that this aristocratic notion of education is breaking up. The theory of the subject is loosening into enlargement, and will cease by degrees to impose a niggardly restriction on the ex-

tent of the cultivation proper to be attempted in schools for the inferiors of the community.

As these institutions go on, augmenting in number and improving in organization, their pupils will bring their quality and efficacy to the proof, as they grow to maturity, and go forth to act their part in society. And there can be no doubt, that while too many of them may be mournful exemplifications of the power with which the evil genius of the corrupt nature, combined with the infection of a bad world, resists the better influences of instruction, and may, after the advantage of such an introductory stage, be carried down toward the old debased level, a very considerable proportion will take and permanently maintain a far higher ground. They will have become imbued with an element, which must put them in strong repulsion to that coarse vulgar that will be sure to continue in existence, in this country, long enough to be a trial of the moral taste of this better cultivated race. It will be seen that they cannot associate with it by choice, and in the spirit of companionship. And while *they* are thus withheld on their part, from approximating, it may be hoped that, in certain better disposed parts of that vulgar, there may be a conversion of the repelling principle into an impulse to approach and join them on their

own ground. There will be numbers among it who cannot be so entirely insensate or perverse, as to look with carelessness at the advantages obtained, through the sole medium of personal improvement, by those who had otherwise been exactly on the same level as themselves. The effect of this view on pride, in some, and on better propensities, it may be hoped, in others, will be to excite them to make their way upward to a community which, they will clearly see, could commit no greater folly than to come downward to them. And we will presume a friendly disposition in most of those who shall have been raised to this higher ground, to meet such aspirers and help them to ascend.

And while they will thus draw upward the less immovable and hopeless part of the mass below them, they will themselves on the other hand be placed, by the respectability of their understanding and manners, within the influence of the higher cultivation of the classes above them; a great advantage, as we have taken occasion to notice in a former stage of these observations:—a great advantage, that is to say, if the cultivation among those classes is generally of such a quality and extent, that the people could not be brought a few degrees nearer to them without becoming, through the effect of their example,

more in love with sense, knowledge, and propriety of conduct. For it were somewhat too much of simplicity, perhaps, to take it for a thing of course that the people would always meet a display of intelligence that would make them ashamed of their own ignorance, and such evidence, in manners and character, of a liberal cultivation, as would compel their respect when they made any approach to a communication with the classes superior in possessions and station. If this *might* have been assumed as a thing of course, and if therefore it might have been confidently reckoned on that the more improving of the people would receive from the ranks above them a salutary influence, similar to that which we have been supposing they will themselves exert on the vulgar mass below them, there had been a happy omen for the community ; and if it may not, it is not the fault of those who are seeking all means for raising the people from their degradation. But then it would be an admirable turn to make the lower orders act beneficially on the higher. And it is an important advantage likely to accrue from the better education of the common people, that their rising attainments would compel not a few of their superiors to look to the state of their own mental pretensions, on perceiving that *this*, at last, was

becoming a ground on which their precedence was to be measured. Surely it would be a most excellent thing, that they should find themselves thus incommodiously pressed upon by the only circumstance, perhaps, that could make them sensible there are more kinds of poverty than that single one to which alone they had hitherto attached ideas of disgrace; and should be forced to preserve that ascendancy for which wealth and station would formerly suffice, at the cost, now, of a good deal more reading, thinking, and general self-discipline? Would it be a worthy sacrifice, that to spare some substantial agriculturists, idle gentlemen, and sporting or promenading ecclesiastics, such an afflictive necessity, the actual tillers of the ground, and the workers in manufacture and mechanics, should continue to be kept in stupid ignorance?

It is very possible this may excite a smile, as the threatening of a necessity or a danger to these privileged persons, which it is thought they may be comfortably assured is very remote. This danger (namely, that a good many of them, or rather of those who are coming in the course of nature to succeed them in the same rank, will find that its relative consequence cannot be sustained but at a very considerably higher pitch of mental

qualification) is threatened upon no stronger presages than the following :—Allow us first to take it for granted, that it is not a very protracted length of time that is to pass away before the case comes to be, that a large proportion of the children of the lower classes are trained, through a course of assiduous instruction and exercise in the most valuable knowledge, during a series of years, in schools which every thing possible is done to render efficient. Then, if we include in one computation all the time they will have spent in real mental effort and acquirement there, and all those pieces and intervals of time which we may reasonably hope that many of them will improve to the same purpose in the subsequent years, a very great number of them will have employed, by the time they reach middle age, many thousands of hours more than people in their condition have heretofore done, in a way the most directly tending to place them greatly further on in whatever importance mind is to bear in society. And how must we be estimating the natural capacities of these inferior classes, or the perceptions of the higher, not to foresee as a consequence, that these latter will find their relative situation greatly altered, with respect to the measure of knowledge and mental power requisite as one most essential constituent of their

superiority, in order to command the unfeigned deference of their inferiors?

Our strenuous promoters of the schemes for cultivating the minds of all the people, are not afraid of professing to foresee, that when schools, of that completely disciplinarian organization which they will gradually attain, shall have become general, and shall be vigorously seconded by all those auxiliary expedients for popular instruction which are also in progress, a very pleasing modification will become apparent in the character, the moral colour, if we might so express it, of the people's ordinary employment. The young persons so instructed, being appointed, for the most part, to the same occupations to which they would have been destined had they grown up in utter ignorance and vulgarity, are expected to give striking evidence that the meanness, the debasement almost, which had characterized many of those occupations in the view of the more refined classes, was in truth the debasement of the men rather than of the callings; which, it is anticipated, will change to an appearance of much more respectability, as associated with the sense, decorum, and self-respect of the performers, than they had borne when blended and polluted with all the low habits, manners, and language, of ignorance and vulgar gross-

ness. And then for the degree of excellence in the performance,—who will be the persons most likely to excel, in the many branches of workmanship and business which admit of being better done in proportion to the degree of intelligence directed upon them? And again, who will be most in requisition for those offices of management and superintendence, where something must be confided to judgment and discretion, and where the value is felt, (often grievously felt from the want,) of some capacity of combination and foresight?

Such as these are among the subordinate benefits reasonably, we might say infallibly, calculated upon. Our philanthropists are confident in foreseeing also, that very many of these better educated young persons will be valuable co-operators with all who may be more formally employed in instruction, against that ignorance from which themselves have been so happily saved; will exert an influence, by their example and the steady avowal of their principles, against the vice and folly in their vicinity; and will be useful advisers of their neighbours in their perplexities, and sometimes moderators in their discords. It is predicted, with a confidence so much resting on general grounds of probability, as hardly to need the instances

already afforded in various parts of the country to confirm it, that here and there one of the well instructed humbler class will become an able and useful public teacher of the most important truth. It is, in short, anticipated with delightful assurance, that great numbers of those who shall go forth from under the friendly guardianship which will take the charge of their youthful minds, will be examples, through life and at its conclusion, of the power and felicity of religion.

Here we can suppose it not improbable that some one may, in pointed terms, put the question,—Do you then, at last, mean to affirm that you can, by the proposed course of discipline, absolutely secure that effectual operation and ascendancy of religion in the mind, which shall place it in the right condition toward God, and in a state of fitness for passing, without fear or danger, into the scenes of its future endless existence?

Certainly we should have supposed, that many sentiments and modes of expression, occurring in the preceding course of observations, might have been sufficient to preclude any such question. But let it be asked, since there can be no difficulty to reply. We do *not* affirm that any form of discipline, the wisest

and best in the power of the wisest and best men to apply, is competent of itself thus to subject the mind to the power of religion. On the contrary, we believe that grand effect can be accomplished only by a special influence of the Divine Being, operating by the means applied in a well judged system of instruction, or, if he pleases, without it. But next we have to say, that it is perfectly certain, notwithstanding, that the application of these human means will, in a multitude of instances, be efficacious to that most happy effect.

This certainty arises from a few very plain general considerations. The first is, that the whole system of means appointed by the Almighty to be employed as a human process for presenting religion solemnly in view before men's minds, and enforcing it upon them, is an appointment *expressly intended* for working that great effect which secures their endless felicity, though to what extent in point of number, is altogether unknown to the subordinate agents. With some awful exceptions of obdurate malignant infidelity, (as in the case of the Jews in the time of our Lord,) in which it was plainly signified that the manifestation and enforcement of divine truth would not, and should not, have this happy consequence, —with these exceptions, the whole order of

expedients in this great course of operation is most formally represented, by him who has commanded their employment, as to be employed in a confident expectation of attaining, in a proportion to be determined by himself, the end to which these expedients are avowedly directed. The appointment is most evidently not one of mere exercise for the faculties and submissive obedience of those who are summoned to be active in its execution.

Accordingly, there are in the divine revelation very many explicit and animating assurances, that their exertions shall certainly be in a measure successful, in the highest sense of the word. And if these assurances are made in favour of the exertions for inculcating religion generally, that is on men of all conditions and ages, they may be assumed as applying in a special manner to those for impressing it on young minds, before they can be preoccupied and hardened by the depravities of the world. Their being so assumed would be justified on the ground of reason. But happily, besides, the authority itself, which has assured a measure of success to religious instruction as administered generally, has marked with peculiar strength the promise of its success as applied to the young; thus affording rays of hope which have in ten

thousand instances animated the diligence of pious parents, and the other benevolent instructors of children.

There is also palpable and striking matter of fact, to confirm the certainty, that an education in which religious instruction shall be mingled in the mental cultivation, will be rendered, in many instances, efficacious to the formation of a religious character. This obvious fact is, that a much greater proportion of the persons so educated do actually become the subjects of religion, than of a similar number of those brought up in ignorance and profligacy. Take collectively any number of families in which such an education prevails, and the same number in which it does not, and follow the young persons respectively into subsequent life. But any one who hears the suggestion, feels there is no need to wait the lapse of time and follow their actual course. As instructed by what he has already seen in society, he can go forward with them prophetically, with perfect certainty that many more of the one tribe, than of the other, will become persons not only of moral respectability but of decided piety. Any one that should assert respecting them that the probabilities are equal and indifferent, would be considered as sporting a wilful absurdity, or betraying that he is one of those whose errand

into this world it is impossible to conjecture, since they can learn nothing by what they see in it. And the experience which thus authorizes a perfect confidence of prediction, is evidence that, though discipline must wholly disclaim an absolute power to effect the great object in question, there is, nevertheless, such a constitution of things that it most certainly will, as an instrumental cause, in many instances effect it.

The state of the matter, then, is very simple. The Supreme Cause of men's being "made wise to salvation," in appointing a system of means, to be put by human activity in operation toward this effect, has also appointed that in this operation they shall infallibly be attended with a measure of success in accomplishing that highest good to which they are directed, — a measure which was not to be accomplished in the absence of such means. So much he has signified to men as an absolute certainty; but then, he has connected this certainty in an arbitrary, and, as to our knowledge, indefinite manner with the system. It is a certainty connected with the system *as taken generally and comprehensively*; and which it is not given to us to affix to the particular instances in which the success will take place. It is a Divine Volition suspended over the

whole scene of cultivation ; like a cloud from which we cannot tell where precisely the shower to fertilize it will fall. The agents under the Sovereign Dispenser are to proceed on this positive assurance that the success *shall be somewhere*, though they cannot know that it will be in this one case, or in the other. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand ; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this, or that.” If they rate the value of their agency so high, as to hold it incompatible with their dignity that any part of their labours should be performed under the condition of possibly being unsuccessful, they may be assured that such is not exactly the estimate in which they stand in the judgment of Him to whom they look for the acceptance of their services, and for the reward.

But it may be added, that the great majority of those who are intent on the schemes for enlightening and reforming mankind, are entertaining a confident hope of the approach of a period when the success will be far greater in proportion to the measure of exertion, in every department of the system of instrumentality for that grand object. We cherish this confidence, not on the strength of any pretension to be able to resolve prophetic emblems and numbers into precise

dates and events of the present and approaching times. It rests on a much more general mode of combining the very extraordinary indications of the period we live in, with the substantial purport of the divine predictions. There unquestionably gleams forth, through the plainer lines and through the mystical imagery of prophecy, the vision of a better age, in which the application of the truths of religion to men's minds will be irresistible. And what should more naturally be interpreted as one of the dawning signs of its approach, than a sudden wide movement at once to clear their intellects and bring the heavenly light to shine close upon them; accompanied by a prodigious breaking up in the old system of the world, which hardly recognised in the inferior millions the very existence of souls to need such an illumination?

The labourers in the institutions for instructing the young descendants of those millions, may often regret to perceive how little the process is as yet informed with the energy which is thus to pervade the world. But let them regard as one great undivided economy and train of operation, these initiatory efforts and all that is to follow, till that time "when all shall know the Lord;" and take by anticipation, as in fraternity with the happier

future labourers, their just share of that ultimate triumph. Those active spirits, in the happier stages, will look back with this sentiment of kindred and complacency to those who sustained the earlier toils of the good cause, and did not suffer their zeal to languish under the comparative smallness of their success.

We shall conclude with a few sentences in the way of reply to another question, which we can surmise there may be persons ready to ask, after this long iteration of the assertion of the necessity of knowledge to the common people. The question would be to this effect: What do you, all this while, mean to assign as the *measure* of knowledge proper for the people to be put in possession of?—for you do not specify the kinds, nor limit the extent: you talk in vague general terms of mental improvement; you leave the whole matter indefinite; and for all that appears, the people are never to know when they know enough.

It is answered, that we *do* leave the extent undefined, and should request to be informed where, and why, the line of circumscription and exclusion should be drawn.

Is it, we could really wish to know, a point at all yet decided, wherein consist the value

and importance of the human nature? Any liberal scheme for its universal cultivation is met by such a jealous parsimony toward the common people, such a ready imputation of wild theory, such protesting declamations against the mischief of practically applying abstract principles, such an undisguised or betrayed precedence given to mere interests of state, and those perhaps very mean ones, before all others, and such whimsical prescriptions for making a salutary compound of a little knowledge and much ignorance,—that it might seem to be more than doubtful whether the human nature, in the mass of mankind at least, be of any such consistence, or for any such purpose, as is affirmed in our common-places on the subject. It is uniformly assumed in the language of divines, and of the philosophers in most repute, that the worth, the dignity, the importance of man, are in his rational, immortal nature; and that therefore the best condition of *that* is his true felicity and glory, and the object chiefly to be aimed at in all that is done by him, and for him, on earth. But whether this should be regarded as any thing more than the elated faith of ascetics, a fine dogma of academics, or a theme for show in the pomp of moral rhetoric? For we often see, and it is very striking to see, how principles which are

suffered to pass for infallible truth while content to stay within the province of speculation, and to be pronounced as mere doctrine, may be disowned and repelled when they come demanding to have their appropriate place and influence in the practical sphere. Even many pretended advocates of christianity, who in naming certain principles would seem to make them of the very essence of the moral part of that religion, and, in discoursing merely *as religionists*, will insist on their vital importance, will yet shuffle and equivocate about these principles, and in effect set them aside, when they are attempted to be applied to some of their most legitimate uses. If, for example, these religionists are among the servile adherents of corrupted institutions and iniquity invested with power, they will easily find accommodating interpretations, or pleas of exemption from the direct authority, of some of the most sacred maxims of their professed religion. Serve the true God when we happen to be in the right place; but at all events we must attend our master to pay homage in the temple of Rimmon, or, should he please to require it, that of Moloch,—with this signal difference from the ancient instance of peccant servility, that whereas in that case pardon for it was implored, in the present case a merit is

made of the sycophancy and the idolatry. Unless the principles of christianity will acknowledge the supremacy of *something else* than christianity, in the mode of their application to estimate the importance of the popular mind, they may take their repose in bodies of divinity, sermons, catechisms, systems of ethics, or wherever they can find a place.

But is it really admitted, as a great principle for *practical* application, that the mind, the intelligent imperishable existence, is the supremely valuable thing in man? It is then admitted, inevitably, that the discipline, the correction, the improvement, the maturation, of this spiritual being, to the highest attainable degree, is the great object to be desired by men, for themselves and one another. That is to say, that knowledge, cultivation, salutary exercise, wisdom, all that can conduce to the perfection of the mind, form the state in which it is due to man's nature that he should be endeavoured to be placed. But then, this is due to his nature by an absolutely *general* law. He cannot be so circumstanced in the order of society that this shall *not* be due to it. No situation in which the arrangements of the world, or say of Providence, may place him, can constitute him a specific kind of creature, to which is no longer fit and

necessary that which is necessary to the well-being of man considered generally, as a spiritual, immortal nature. The essential law of this nature cannot be abrogated by men's being placed in humble and narrow circumstances, in which a very large portion of their time and exertions are required for mere subsistence. This accident of a confined situation is no more a reason why their minds should not require the best attainable cultivation, than would be the circumstance that the body in which a man's mind is lodged, happens to be of smaller dimensions than those of other men.

That under the disadvantages of this humble situation they *cannot* acquire all the mental improvement, desirable for the perfection of their intelligent nature,—that the situation renders it impracticable,—is quite another matter. So far as this inhibition is real and absolute, that is, so far as it must remain after the best exertion of human wisdom and means in their favour, it must be submitted to as one of the infelicities of their allotment by Providence. What we are insisting on is, that since by the law of their nature there is to them the same general necessity as to any other human beings, of that which is essential to the wellbeing of the mind, they should be advanced in this improvement *as far as they*

can; that is, as far as a wise and benevolent disposition of the community can make it practicable for them to be advanced. It is an odious hypocrisy to talk of the narrow limits to this advancement as an ordination of Providence, when a well ordered constitution and management of the community might enlarge those limits. At least it is so in the *justifiers* of that social system: those who deplore and condemn it *may* properly speak of the appointment of Providence, but in another sense; as they would speak of the dispensations of Providence in consolation to a man iniquitously imprisoned or impoverished.

Let the people then be advanced in the improvement of their rational nature *as far as they can*. A greater degree of this progress will be more for their welfare than a less. This might be shewn in forms of illustration easily conceived, and as easily vindicated from the imputation of extravagance in the conception by instances which every observer may have met with in real life. A poor man, cultivated in a small degree, has acquired a few just ideas of an important subject, which lies out of the scope of his daily employments for subsistence. Be that subject what it may, if those ideas are of any use to him, by what principle would one idea

more, or two, or twenty, be of *no* use to him? Of no use!—when all the thinking world knows, that every additional clear idea of a subject is valuable by a ratio of progress much greater than that of the mere numerical increase, and that by a large addition of ideas a man triples the value of those with which he began. He has read a small meagre tract on the subject, or perhaps only an article in a magazine, or an essay in the literary column of a provincial newspaper. Where would be the harm, on supposition he can fairly afford the time, in consequence of husbanding it for this very purpose, of his reading a well written concise book, which would give him a clear, comprehensive view of the subject?

But perhaps another branch of the tree of knowledge bends its fruit temptingly to his hand. And if he should indulge, and gain a tolerably clear notion of one more interesting subject, (still punctually regardful of the duties of his ordinary vocation,) where, we say again, is the harm? Converse with him; observe his conduct; compare him with a wretched clown in a neighbouring dwelling; and say that he is the worse for having thus much of the provision for a mental subsistence. But if thus much has contributed greatly to his advantage, why should he be interdicted still further attainments? Are

you alarmed for him, if he will needs go the length of acquiring some knowledge of geography, the solar system, and the history of his own country and of the ancient world? * Let him proceed; supply him gratuitously with some of the best books on these subjects; and if you shall converse with him again, after another year or two of his progress, and compare him once more with the ignorant, stunted, cankered beings in his vicinity, you will see whether there be any thing essentially at variance between his narrow circumstances in life and his mental enlargement.

You are willing, perhaps, that he *should* know a few facts of ancient times, and can, though with hesitation, trust him with Goldsmith's *Histories of Greece and Rome*. But if he should then by some means find his way into such a work as that of Rollin, or betray

* These denominations of knowledge, so strange as they will to some persons appear, in such a connexion, we have ventured to write from observing, that they stand in the schemes of elementary instruction in the missionary schools for the children of the natives of Bengal. But of course we are to acknowledge, that the vigorous, high-toned spirits of those Asiatic idolaters are adapted to receive a much superior style of cultivation to any of which the feeble progeny of England can be supposed to be capable.

that he covets an acquaintance with those of Gillies, or even Mitford,—it is all over with him for being an useful member of society in his humble situation. You would consent (may we suppose?) to his reading a slender abridgment of voyages and travels; but what is to become of him if nothing less will content him than the whole-length story of Captain Cook? He will direct, it is to be hoped, some of his best attention to the supreme subject of religion. And you would quite approve of his perusing some useful tracts, some manuals of piety, some commentary on a catechism, some volume of serious plain discourses; but he is absolutely undone if his ambition should rise at length to Stillingfleet, or Howe, or Jeremy Taylor.* He

* It should be unnecessary to observe, that the object in citing *any* names in this paragraph was, to give a somewhat definite cast to the description of the supposed progress of the plebeian self-instructor. The principal of them are mentioned simply as being of such note in their departments, that he would be likely to hear of them among the first of the authors to be sought if he were aspiring to something beyond his previously humble and abridged reading. The reader may substitute for these names any others, of the superior order, that he may think more proper to stand in their place. It would therefore be animadversion or ridicule misspent, to make the charge of extravagance on this imagined course of a plain man's reading, with a specific reference to the authors here named, as if it had been meant that precisely these, by a

is by all means, you say, to be kept out of all such pernicious company, in which it is impossible he can learn any lesson but one,—to hate good morals, just laws, virtuous kings, a polished and benevolent gentry, and learned and pious teachers of religion. How befooled it were to be by a favourite fancy, if we expected him to learn any thing better in such a school. Well; *let* him be kept as far as possible from the mischief of all such books and knowledge; let him hardly know that there *was* an ancient world, or that there *are* on the globe such regions and wonders as travellers have described; or that a reason and eloquence above the pitch of some plain homily ever illustrated and enforced religion. *Let* him keep clear of all such evil communications; and then, (since we were expressly making it a condition, that he can fairly spare the time for such reading from his common employment,) and then,—he will have just so much the more time for needless sleep, for discussing the trifles and characters of the neighbourhood, or, (supposing him still of a religious habit,) for tiring his friends and family with the well meant but very unattractive iteration of a few serious phrases and peculiar selection, were to be the authors he may be supposed to peruse, and in perusing, to waste his time and destroy his sense of duty.

remarks, of which they will have long since learnt to anticipate the last word from hearing the first. Advantages like these he certainly may enjoy in consequence of his preclusion from the higher and wider field of ideas. But however valuable these may be in themselves, they will not ensure his being better qualified for the common business and proprieties of his station, than another man in the same sphere of life whose mind has acquired that larger reach which we are describing. It is no more than what we have repeatedly seen exemplified, when we represent this transgressor into the prohibited field as probably acquitting himself with exemplary regularity and industry in his allotted labours, and even in this very capacity preferred by the men of business to the illiterate tools in his neighbourhood; nay, most likely preferred, in the more technical sense of the word, to the honourable, but often sufficiently vexatious office, of directing and superintending the operations of those tools.

And where, now, is the evil he is incurring or causing, during this progress of violating, step after step, the circumscription by which the aristocratic compasses were again and again, with small reluctant extensions to successive greater distances, defining the scope of the knowledge proper for a man of his con-

dition? It is a bad thing, is it, that he has a multiplicity of ideas to relieve the tædium incident to the sameness of his course of life; that, with many things which had else been but mere insignificant facts, or plain dry notions and principles, he has a variety of interesting associations; like woodbines and roses wreathing round the otherwise bare ungraceful forms of erect stones or withered trees; that the world is an interpreted and intelligible volume before his eyes; that he has a power of applying himself to *think* of what it becomes at any time necessary for him to understand. Is it a judgment upon him for his temerity, in “seeking and intermeddling with wisdom” with which he had no business, that he has so much to impart to his children as they are growing up, and that if some of them are already come to maturity, they know not where to find a man to respect more than their father? Or if he takes a part in the converse and devotional exercises of religious society, is no one there the better for the clearness and the plenitude of his thoughts and the propriety of his expression? —But there would be no end of the preposterous suppositions fairly attachable to the notion, that the mental improvement of the common people has some proper limit of arbitrary prescription, on the ground simply

of their *being* the common people, and quite distinct from the restriction which their circumstances may invincibly impose on their ability.

Taken in this latter view, we acknowledge that their condition would be a subject for most melancholy contemplation, if we did not hope for better times. The benevolent reflector, when sometimes led to survey in thought the endless myriads of beings with minds, within the circuit of a country like this, will have a momentary vision of them as they would be if all improved to the highest mental condition to which it is *naturally possible* for them to be exalted; a magnificent spectacle; but it instantly fades and vanishes. And the sense is so powerfully upon him of the unchangeable economy of the world, which, even if the fairest fondest visions of the millennium itself were realized, would still render such a thing *actually* impossible, that he hardly regrets the bright scene was but a beautiful cloud, and melts away. His imagination then descends to view this immense tribe of rational beings in another, and comparatively moderate state, of the cultivation of their faculties, a state not one third part so lofty as that in which he had beheld all the individuals improved to the highest degree of which each is naturally capable;

and he thinks, that the condition of man's abode on earth *might* admit of their being raised to *this* elevation. But he soon sees, that till a mighty change shall take place in the system according to which the nations are managing their affairs, this too is impossible; and with regret he sees even this inferior ideal spectacle pass away, to rest on an age in distant prospect. At last he takes his imaginary stand on what he feels to be a very low level of the supposed improvement of the general popular mind; and he says, Thus much, at the least, should be a possibility allowed by the circumstances of the people under *any* tolerable order of the disposition of national interests;—and then he turns to look down upon an actual condition in which care, and toil, and distress, render it utterly impossible for a great proportion of the people to reach, or even approach, this his last and lowest conception of what the state of their minds ought to be.

In spite of all the optimists, it is a grievous reflection, after the race has had on earth so many thousands of years for attaining its most advantageous condition there, that all the experience, the philosophy, the science, the art, the power acquired by mind over matter,—that all the contributions of all departed and all present spirits and bodies, yes,

and all religion too, should have come but to this ;—to this, that in what is esteemed the most favoured and improved nation of all terrestrial space and time, a vast proportion of the people are absolutely found in a condition which confines them, with all the rigour of necessity, to the veriest childhood of intelligent existence, without its innocence.

But at the very same time, and while compassion is rising at such a view, there comes in on the other hand the reflection, that even in the actual state of things, there are a considerable number of the people who *might* acquire a valuable share of improvement which they do not. Great numbers of them, grown up, waste by choice, and multitudes of children waste through utter neglect, a large quantity of precious time, which their narrow circumstances still leave free from the iron dominion of necessity. And they will waste it, it is certain that they will, till education shall have become general, and much more vigorous in discipline. If through a miracle there were to come down on this country, with a sudden delightful affluence of temporal melioration, resembling the vernal transformation from the dreariness of winter, an universal prosperity, so that all should be placed in ease and plenty, it would require another miracle to prevent this benign-

nity of heaven from turning to a dreadful mischief. What would the great tribe of the uneducated people do with the half of their time, which we may suppose that such a state would give to their voluntary disposal? Every one can answer infallibly, that the far greater number of them would consume it in idleness, vanity, or abomination. Educate them, then, bring them under a grand process of intellectual and moral reformation;—or, in all circumstances and events, calamitous or prosperous, they are still a race made in vain!

In taking leave of the subject, we wish to express, in strong terms, the applause and felicitations due to those excellent individuals, found here and there, who in very humble circumstances, and perhaps with very little advantage of education in their youth, have been excited to a strenuous, continued exertion for the improvement of their minds; by which they have made, (the unfavourable situation considered,) admirable attainments, which are now passing with inestimable worth into the instruction of their families, and a variety of usefulness within their sphere. They have nobly struggled with their threatened destiny, and have overcome it. When they think, with regret, how confined, after all, is their portion of knowledge, as compared with the rich possessions of

those who have had from their infancy all facilities and the amplest time for its acquirement, let them be consoled by reflecting, that the value of mental progress is not to be measured solely by the quantity of knowledge possessed, but partly, and indeed still more, by the corrective, invigorating effect produced on the mental powers by the resolute exertions made in attaining it. And therefore, since, under their great disadvantages, it has required a much greater degree of this resolute exertion in them to force their way victoriously out of ignorance, than it has required in those who have had every thing in their favour, to make a long free career over the field of knowledge, they may be assured they have obtained a greater benefit in *proportion* to the measure of what they have attained to know. This persistence of a determined will to do what has been so difficult to be done, has infused a peculiar energy into the exercise of their powers; a valuable point of compensation, to be set against the circumstance, that they have not equally with the ampler possessors of knowledge, the advantage of illustrating and perfecting one principle of it by the accession of many others. Let them persevere in this worthy self-discipline, appropriate to the introduction of an endless mental life. Let them go on to com-

plete the proof how much a mind incited to a high purpose may triumph over a depression of its external condition ;—but solemnly taking care, that all their improvements may tend to such a result, that at length the rigour of their lot and the confinement of mortality itself bursting at once from around them, may give them to those intellectual revelations, that everlasting sun-light of the soul, in which the truly wise will expand all their faculties in a happier economy.

A
DISCOURSE
THE
SUBSTANCE OF WHICH WAS DELIVERED
AT THE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE
BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY,
IN BRISTOL, SEPTEMBER, 1818.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It is very true, as several friends have suggested, that the following Discourse might, on some accounts, have been more properly denominated an Essay. But, as the series of thoughts of which it consists was actually addressed, in the order in which they here occur, though with much less amplification, to a public assembly, and as somewhat of the manner of expression proper to such an address is retained in the composition, the author thinks there might be an appearance of literary affectation in giving it any other title than one describing it in that character.

DISCOURSE,

&c.

JUDGES V. 23.

They came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

THE practice may be too frequent, of accommodating objects and effects in the world of nature, the relations and transactions in that of human society, and the merely secular facts of the scripture history, to the purpose of representing, in the way of formal and protracted similitude, the truths and interests of religion. We may observe, however, that it seems to the honour of religion that so many things *can* be accommodated to its illustration, without any recourse to that perverted ingenuity which fancifully describes or invents resemblances. It is an evident and remarkable fact, that there is a certain principle of correspondence to religion throughout the

economy of the world. Things bearing an apparent analogy to its truths, sometimes more prominently, sometimes more abstrusely, present themselves on all sides to a thoughtful mind. He that made all things for himself appears to have willed that they should be a great system of emblems, reflecting or shadowing that system of principles which is the true theory concerning Him, and our relations to Him. So that religion, standing up in grand parallel to an infinity of things, receives their testimony and homage, and speaks with a voice which is echoed by the creation.

It may therefore be permitted us to fix upon a circumstance in the political conduct of an ancient people, as adapted to suggest more than it essentially contains, and to carry our thoughts, by analogy, to a kind of duty and of delinquency more directly related to religion. Under this license our subject is introduced by a sentence pronounced, we may presume at the divine dictation, in reproach of a refusal to co-operate in a very different kind of service from that which we have, on the present occasion, to recommend.

The negative form of the charge,—They came *not* to the help of the Lord,—may remind us of the grievous fact, that by far the greater number of the judicial negative state-

ments in the Bible, respecting the conduct of men, are accusations. The mention that they did *not* do the thing in question is very generally the implied assertion that they ought to have done it. And the consideration becomes still more awful upon recollection that we are told, that the last negative statement to be uttered on earth, and uttered by the greatest voice, will be with an emphasis of condemnation ; “ Inasmuch as ye did it *not*—.”

Observe how much guilt there may be in mere omission, and that, even though we should suppose the persons, who decline the one specific duty, to be occupied, while neglecting it, in employments in themselves innocent and laudable. It is very possible that the people of whose absence from the appointed scene of action we have just read the accusing record, might have brought a plea on this ground, against the justice of the consequent malediction. They might perhaps have had to say, that they were diligently prosecuting the labours of their rural economy, which there might be, at the time, particular reasons why they should not suspend ; or that they were intent on certain plans for rectifying disorders in their society ; or that they were employing the time in some peculiarly solemn forms of worship, perhaps im-

ploring the intervention of heaven in the
 alarming crisis, under a persuasion of the
 perfect sufficiency of the Divine Power inde-
 pendently of human means. But no such
 pleas would have availed, to avert the vin-
 dictive sentence which the prophetess was
 instructed to pronounce on their refusal to
 do *that one thing* which the summons of
 unquestionable authority had signified to be,
 in that juncture, their precise duty. Such
 allegations might indeed have been disho-
 nestly made, as an attempt to veil selfishness
 and cowardice, the real causes probably for
 withholding the required service; and then
 the hypocrisy would have incurred a prompt
 exposure and a severity of rebuke; but even
 had they been made sincerely, and proved to
 be true, they would not have arrested nor
 revoked the condemnation. The appeal of
 the defaulters would have been silenced by
 the decision, that it is of the essence of diso-
 bedience and rebellion to assume to make
 commutations and substitutions of duty, to
 transfer obligation to where it would be less
 inconvenient that it should be enforced, and
 to affect to render, in the form of preferred
 and easier services, an equivalent for the
 obedience which the righteous and supreme
 authority has distinctly required to be ren-
 dered in that harder service which is evaded.

Supposing these people to have really been of a quiet and harmless disposition, and assiduous in the useful vocations of ordinary life, there may appear, notwithstanding the urgency of the occasion, something hard in the alternative they were placed in, of suddenly abandoning their homes to rush into the perils of battle, or suffering all that was denounced in so heavy an execration. And, in the retrospect of the many forms into which human duty has been diversified by occasions, as displayed in the Bible and other records, we see many situations of exceeding hardship—not meaning, by such a term, an imputation on that Authority which prescribed their arduous exercises. The great contest against Evil, in all its modes of invasion of this world, (but our reference is chiefly to those requiring men's resistance in the religious capacity,) has been a service assigned in every possible difference of circumstance and proportion; and some men's shares have involved a violence of exertion, or a weight of suffering, which we look upon with wonder and almost with terror. We shudder to think of mortals like ourselves having been brought into such fearful dilemmas between obedience and guilt. We shrink from placing ourselves but in imagination under such tests of fidelity to God and a good

cause. The painful sympathy with those agents and sufferers terminates in self-congratulation, that their allotment of duty has not been ours. The tacit sentiment is, I am very glad I can be a good man on less severe conditions.

And the sentiment is justified by the necessary and eternal laws of our nature. It may become an emotion of piety, and rise in gratitude to God for having appointed us to a less formidable service. But it may also be indulged in such a manner as to betray us into dangerous delusion. In pleasing ourselves with the thought of our exemption from an order of duties involving the sacrifice of every thing gratifying in mortal existence but a good conscience,—duties to be performed at the cost of suffering oppressive and unmitigated toil, pain, want, reproach, loss of liberty and even of life itself,—duties imposing such a trial of fidelity as confessors and martyrs have sustained,—we may be led into a wrong estimate of the difference between their situation and ours, as if our obligations were constituted under an *essentially* different economy. With an unthinking self-assurance that the satisfaction we feel is gratitude to God for a less rigorous appointment, we may be making exemptions for ourselves which he has never made. De-

lighted that at the easy price of only being thankful to him, we are allowed to take so much indulgence, we may with a deluded confidence widen out the sphere of privilege beyond one point, and beyond another, where he has marked the boundary; with always the strongest propensity to this enlargement on that side where the hardest duties are placed; till the mind at length reposes in a scheme of duty adjusted on its own authority, and far from coincident with that which has been dictated by the divine will.

There is delusion in our self-congratulation at the contrast between what is enjoined on us and the severer duties imposed on some of our great Master's subjects, if we do not perceive that, nevertheless, the matter of our required service is of the very same substance, (with only a favourable difference of mode and proportion,) as that which appears to us of such rigour in theirs. There is delusion, if we are permitted to escape from the habitual sense of being, in the character of the servants of God, placed under the duty and necessity of an intense moral warfare, against powers of evil as real and palpable as ever were encountered in the field of battle. Not to feel ourselves pressed upon by resistless evidence and admonition of this, is an utter ignorance or oblivion of our commission on

earth. And the natural consequence is a fate like that of strangers thoughtlessly straying and surrendering themselves to sleep, in a place where it is a law of the barbarian inhabitants to sacrifice all strangers to their infernal gods.

Yet there is in general so faint an impression of this fact, of an urgent necessity of war till death, as the grand business and obligation of life, that, to the greater number of the persons to whom we offer illustrations of christian topics, no language sounds so idly, no figures appear so insignificant, no forms of common-place so "flat and unprofitable," as those which represent in a military character the exertions by which men are to evince themselves the servants of God. An appeal might safely be made to the consciousness of many hearers and readers whether, at the recurrence of these images in any religious reference, they have not a marked sense of insipidity strongly tending to disgust, caused, in some degree, we may allow, by a too frequent iteration, but still more by the impression of unmeaningness and futility in employing such terms for such a subject.

It is striking to observe, at the same time, how some of the persons who are thus tired to loathing of these images in their moral and spiritual application, will disclose their latent

energy at similar language and figures coming before them in literal representation of war. Most of the excitable class of spirits, whether in youth or much more advanced in life, can be kindled to enthusiasm by the grand imagery of battles and heroic achievements. Those very terms of martial metaphor, under the spiritual import of which they are beginning, perhaps amidst some religious service, to sink in dulness and disgust, may give them sudden relief by diverting the mind away to an imagined scene of conflict; and it shall feel a proud elation in passing from the stale and sleepy notion of a spiritual warfare, to the magnificence of the combats which are displayed in fire and blood to the eyes, and in thunder to the ears. The attention being wholly withdrawn from the strain which is perhaps still proceeding, in words no longer sensibly heard, to figure out the christian soldier, the imagination shall follow the track of some brilliant mortal, of history or fiction, through scenes of tumult, and terror, and noble daring, and shall adore him as beheld exulting unhurt in victory, or as expiring in the manner in which it is by general consent accounted graceful for a hero to fall. The enthusiast, while sitting still and abstracted, may be at moments enchanted into a kind of personation of the character, and glow with

emotion in the mimic fancy of acting himself a part so splendid. And these scenes of fury and destruction, thus fervidly imagined, shall really be deemed the sublimest exhibitions of man, in which human energy approaches nearest to a rivalry with the "immortals,"—for the epic diction of paganism may naturally be the expression of sentiments fired by its spirit. "Immortal," may be also the word which he is silently pronouncing in his adoration of the personage whose career he is pursuing in reverie; conformably to that caprice of human madness, which has determined the special selection of such an epithet for bedecking the most active dealers in death, whose exposure to be smitten by it is an inevitable condition of their inflicting it.

If, in this inflamed state of the mind, the idea were again presented of the Christian warfare, of a contest against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness, it would be repelled with disdain of the impertinence or arrogance which could assume for *such* matters any of the lofty terms belonging, and, (it would be proudly said,) *deservedly* applied, to the transactions of Trafalgar and Waterloo. This contempt may be felt by persons to whom the glories of war are only a pageant of the imagination; but it would be a still stronger sentiment in most of the men who

have actually witnessed and shared the terrors and triumphs of martial exploit, if it could happen that they should hear the figurative language in question, and lend for a moment attention enough to understand what it should mean. In short, between distaste for its insipidity, and almost resentful scorn of its impertinence of pretension, the metaphor would be, by most men of high-toned spirit, flung back on the imbecile religionists, as an inane fancy, in which they are seeking to make for themselves a compensation for their incapacity of any thing truly great. Let these wars, enemies, and heroes of vapour, they would say, busy the feeble souls to which they can have the effect of realities.

But while this is their feeling, what shall we think of the sanity of their perception? Alas for the state of the senses, of the faculties of apprehension, in those minds that have so little cognisance of a most fearful reality which exists on every side and presses upon them! How strange it is to see men in possession of a quick and vigilant faculty for perceiving every thing that can approach them in hostility, except that nearest, deadliest, and mightiest enemy of all, Moral Evil. And how deplorable to see them prompt in indignation, instantly in the attitude of defence or attack, burning with martial spirit, inspired

with notions of glory and victory, and at the same time turning away with slight or scorn at the representations, by which divine or human admonition is attempting to alarm them to a sense of their danger from that foe compared with which all the rest are but shapes of air ! That creatures should be thus maddened with fancies of the glory of destructive combats with one another, and insensible of the presence and quality of that destroyer which is invading them all, is truly a sight for the most malignant beings in the creation to exult over. It is a spectacle of still darker character than that which would have been presented by opposed armed parties or legions, gallantly maintaining battle on the yet uncovered spaces of ground, while the universal flood was rising.

Alas ! we must repeat, for the stupified intelligence of those minds which can regard as idle extravagance this language which would arouse their attention to what is as certainly a reality as their own existence, and will infallibly make the most fatal proof of its power on the spirits the least aware that the destroyer is at hand. What a renovation of perceptive faculty is necessary to that being who would ask, either in levity or ignorant surprise, What and where is that foe, so malignant and powerful?—while there

is exposed in full view the mighty mass, and force, and operation, of all that depraves and ruins the souls of men. The insensibility to this fact as existing, and as being incomparably the most awful phenomenon on earth, would itself betray, in such a negation of moral intuition, the intervention of the very enemy described. Let a thoughtful man survey the world of mankind, and see what there is universally among them to excite the sad exclamation, "Wo to the inhabitants of the earth!" Let him deeply consider *what it is* that he is beholding, while he observes this power of evil assailing, and committing grievous mischief upon, every human being, his experience testifying that himself is not exempted. Let him reflect that what he sees is an operation reducing unnumbered myriads of rational and immortal creatures to a state so much worse than that which would be the right and happy condition of their being, that there is nothing in all merely terrestrial things adequate to furnish, by a contrast between extremes, a measure for the difference. He is to form his judgment of the gloomy fact under his view, on an estimate of the injury done to each one, and of the number so injured, including in the account the generations of all past time. And let him try whether an earnest and protracted attention to the dire

exhibition will detect a fallacy in its dreadful aspect, so that his last sober judgment shall be like the relief of recovering by the aid of reason from a superstitious terror. No ; he will find, uniformly, that the evil reveals itself to him in still more substantial and deadly character, the longer his mind fixes with close and solemn inspection on any of its innumerable forms. The impression thus reinforced by stronger demonstration might become too aggravated to be borne, if there were to be suddenly imparted to him a great addition of religious light and sensibility, through which he should receive, while contemplating this vision of evil, a brighter manifestation of the holiness of God, and the perfection of his law. And even such a view as would overpower the firmest mind, might still be but a faint apprehension compared with the perception of some superior pure intelligence looking on this world ; and how much more so in comparison with the thought and feeling with which the Redeemer beheld the error and depravity of our race. No language nor images for communicating information in any world, can ever represent *his* estimate of the scene. But *that* was the only adequate apprehension of it. In whatever degree, therefore, its portentous quality is manifested to the view of a religious observer,

he will always be certain that there is in it a depth of evil still beyond the capacity of his thought ; while in that which he does apprehend he perceives a magnitude and atrocity which can be but feebly expressed by borrowing terms from circumstances the most odious and dreadful in material existence, and saying, that the multitude of human souls are invaded, robbed, polluted, chained, tormented, or murdered.

Sometimes we contemplate, perhaps, the mighty progress of destruction, as carried over a large tract of the earth by some of the memorable instruments of the divine wrath, such as Attila, Zingis Khan, or Timour. We behold a wide spreading terror preceding, to be soon followed by the realization of every alarming presage, in resistless ravage and extermination. Numberless crowds come tumultuously to our view, in all the varieties of dismay, and vain effort, and suffering, and death ; a world of ghastly countenances, desperate struggles, lamentable cries, streaming blood, and expiring agonies ; with the corresponding circumstances of fury and triumph, and the appropriate scenery of habitations burning and the land made a desert. And while one general character of horror is spread over the immensity of the scene, the imagined forms and aspects of individual victims,

frequently marked forth from the confused aggregate, and presented to the mind in momentary glimpses, as vivid points of impression, give an effect of reality to the visionary spectacle of misery and destruction.

When a man of ardent imagination has dwelt upon such a scene till it almost glows into actual existence in his view, let him be assured it is the language of truth and soberness that affirms this spectacle to form but a faint and inadequate image, for representing that other invasion which is made upon the spirits of all mankind, that invasion of which, indeed, all these horrors are themselves but a few of the exterior circumstances and results. And yet creatures assailed and in danger of destruction by this more awful calamity, surveying in fancy, and shuddering while they survey, these furies and miseries of remote times or regions, shall bless their good fortune that *they* are not exposed to any persecution of evil a thousandth part so formidable!

When following in thought those perpetrators of devastation and carnage, we have the consolation of foreseeing its end. The Cæsars and Attilas were as mortal as the millions who expired to give them fame. Of Timour, the language of the Historian, kindling into poetry, relates that “he pitched his last camp at

Otrar, where he was expected by the Angel of Death."* But the power that wages war immediately on the souls of men, the power of depravity and delusion combined, has continued to live and destroy while all these renowned exterminators have yielded to the decree that sent them after their victims. It is perpetually invigorated by the very destruction which it works; as if it fed upon the slain to strengthen itself for new slaughter, and absorbed into its own every life which it takes away. For it is in the nature of moral evil, as acting on human beings, to create to itself new facilities, means, and force, for prolonging that action. From the effects there is continually reflected back an augmentation of power to the cause; a circumstance explained by the fatal aptitude of the subject operated upon to give its own strength to aid the pernicious agency. The injured subject,—the corrupted nature,—still less and less, at each return of the injurer, thinks of suspecting or resisting; still more and more effectively contributes that the malignity may not be frustrated. So that the power of sin acquires over those who are surrendered to it a more decided predominance in each stage of their progress, and makes confirmed assurance of

* Gibbon.

what they will be in the next, unless prevented by something foreign to their own moral nature. And since the majority of human beings have always been under this power, what a security it has possessed for prolonging its empire of destruction! What a security, in the principle by which, in every period, the greater number of all mankind were, as individuals, incessantly growing worse! And to what a dreadful perfection of evil might such a race attain but for Death, that cuts the term of individuals so short, and but for the Spirit of God, that converts some, and puts a degree of restraint on the rest.

And now, if there is really thus in action, against the souls of our race, such an enemy as all these epithets and images can but faintly represent, can a professed servant of God look round, and felicitate himself on having an extremely easy test of his fidelity? Where does he find his privileged ground of immunity and indulgence, while this mighty force of evil drives and sweeps and rages, against God, and truth, against goodness and happiness, his own spirit and all men's spirits, as really as ever he that was named the Scourge of God ravaged the countries of Asia and Europe? In seeking such exemption he must abandon all the objects and interests against which this hostility is directed; must therefore com-

promise and in effect cooperate with the enemy. Let him consider what scheme it is possible to conceive of true service to the King of Heaven in this bad world, which should not commit him in conflict at every point of its execution. Against *every* good he can think of, he will find an appropriate antagonist evil already in full action, an action that will not remit and sink into quiet when he approaches to effect the intended good. Nay, indeed, in what way is it that the servant of God the most readily apprehends the nature of his vocation but in that of seeing what it is *against*? And when he puts the matter to experimental proof, does he ever find that those apprehended adversaries are nothing but menacing shadows? Let him that has made the most determined, protracted, and extensive trial, tell whether it is idle common-place and extravagance when we say that all christian exhortation is in truth a summons to war.

There are many modes of the action of this grand enemy, moral evil, which press so immediately on a man's own personal concern, that a habitual conflict with them is an essential condition of the christian character: a practical question of hostility or acquiescence is implicated with the ordinary course of his

self-government. There are other forms, of great magnitude and hatefulness, existing in the world, which do not so directly force themselves into the question of his being a christian or not. In judgment and feeling he must be, of course, their implacable enemy. But, since they throw no temptation in his way, have the sphere of their malignant operation at a great distance, leave a very wide space clear for christian exercise, and may seem also, by their vastness and consolidated establishment, to be placed the very last of all things that individuals can account themselves competent to attack,—to be as enormous mountains limiting their field,—it may be acknowledged a matter of somewhat less definable obligation in what degree he shall actively expend his animosity upon them. The exhortation to apply a share of his efforts in that direction, may be considered as partly an appeal to those higher sentiments of the religious spirit which aspire to the full magnanimity and zeal of the christian character. It is an admonition to the professed adherents of Him who came on earth with a design extending in hostility, without limit or exception, to *every* thing adverse to goodness and pernicious to the human soul, that if all the moral evil in the world is not acting immediately against *them*, it is against *Him*;

and that it is most reasonable that one of the laws of their devotion to him should be, to identify themselves with him in the practical warfare to the *widest scope* which is really open to their enterprise. It is an incitement to their ambition, not to leave it to be ever said again, with respect to any part of his operations against evil among men, that he trod the wine-press alone, and that of the people there was none with him.

When animated to this high and adventurous spirit, a good man may wonder that the Heathenism prevailing over large tracts of the world should so little have been, in this country or other protestant nations, till a comparatively recent time, accounted as comprehended within the sphere of required christian exertion.* One most amiable fra-

* The indifference of protestants was not for want of examples, such as they were, of activity in this department. It was very well known that there had been various missionary enterprises under the appointment of the Romish Church. And certain individuals employed in those missions were held worthy of perpetual remembrance for their invincible perseverance, and for a share, it was fair to believe, of a truly christian principle in the motives which actuated them. But when these undertakings were viewed in their general character, it was so notorious that they were, as to the prevailing motive, projects of hierarchical ambition, and that, in their mode of prosecution, they accommodated, with the corruptest policy, to the pa-

ternity, indeed, whose gentleness at home involves a principle by which it glows into energy and heroism in proportion to the remoteness of the distance, and the barbarousness and ruggedness of the field of action, to which it is voluntarily exiled, have made missions to the Heathens an essential part of their institution. But in general the friends of religion seem to have regarded those great maladies of the moral world, the delusions and abominations of paganism, with a sort of submissive awe, as if, almost, they had established a prescriptive right to the place they have held so long ; or as if they were part of an unchangeable, uncontrollable order of nature, like the noxious climates of certain portions of the globe, and the liableness in others to the terrors of earthquake. Or at least, when these religious men have looked on these mighty forms of darkness and iniquity, as destined to vanish at some time from the scenes of which they have been so long the curse, and have prayed for that time to be hastened on, they have found themselves anticipating paganism they professed to convert, and introduced a great deal of what was no better than paganism of their own, that protestants could hardly regard them as *christian* projects ; and therefore felt no stimulus at the view of their activity, and derived nothing to excite hope from the boasts, or the facts, of their success.

and invoking, with undefined conception, some entirely unwonted and even properly miraculous mode of divine interposition, and have felt as if it would be for men to stand off and see what God can do ;—in this very feeling perhaps admitting on their minds, in a degree, the imposition through which a defect of faith and zeal may be mistaken for humility and devotion.

Within a later period, however, (within that, chiefly, which has shewn, on so vast a scale, the availableness of human agency for overturning things of ancient, and wide, and commanding establishment in the world,) many good men have begun to regard with much less prostration of feeling those gigantic “dominations” which have for so many ages held so many nations in the debasement of superstition. It came to be questioned why a servant of Christ should shrink from looking any of the powers of darkness in the face, from defying them in his Master’s name, or from making the experiment of an application of heaven’s own fire to their abhorred establishments of deceit and wickedness, in which the souls of men are destroyed. In proportion as the imaginary defence around these tyrannies over the mind was falling, in proportion as the reputed guardianship of fate or infernal power which had seemed to render

them inviolable, was breaking up, the idea of such an experiment on them assumed a less visionary appearance. It took a distinct character of evident practicability; and then it grew to a conviction of duty in some of those to whom the cause of heaven was the object of highest concern on earth.

This impression was strongly felt by the first movers of the project of that Mission to India, which we cannot hesitate to represent as one of the most rational and efficient enterprises of the enlarging christian ambition to make war on the greatest and most inveterate evils of the moral world. When awaked, as it were, to behold an ampler view of the world as a field of activity for the zealots for the best cause, they were struck with surprise at seeing so few adventuring into the distance against the most ancient and vast dominion of paganism; and they thought it high time that an end should be put to the quietude of sentiment, the antichristian tolerance, toward what was so proudly and with impunity standing in defiance of that cause.

The odious quality and the strength of this possessor of so wide a realm and so many slaves, were evident enough under a very imperfect exposure, to place the meditated experiment of hostility greatly out of the common calculations of christian daring. It could

not but appear so far beyond those ordinary presumptions, as to provoke the contempt of those who have no notion of the interference of the Divine power in aid of such a project; so far beyond them, indeed, as to ensure an entire defeat if it were undertaken in dependence on any other than that superior strength. Yet the information possessed at that time, by even the cultivated part of the nation, had not sufficed to give any thing approaching to an adequate idea of the superstition and depravity of the people of Hindoostan. It has been chiefly during the period since this Mission was commenced, and in a considerable degree in consequence of the discussions and the exposition of evidence occasioned by animosity against it, that a rapidly increasing knowledge has brought the general opinion to that judgment of the character and condition of the Hindoos, which the translations made from their sacred books by the missionaries and other eastern scholars, and the reports of travellers reduced at last to the necessity of being honest, are fast contributing to place beyond all controversy. If there was in so old and well examined a thing as human nature no undetected perversity, for these disclosures to bring to light as a new principle of evil, they have, however, shewn some of its known evil principles inhering and opera-

ting in it with such an absoluteness of possessive power, and displaying this despotism in such wantonly versatile, extravagant, and monstrous effects, as to surpass all our previous imaginations and measures of possibility. The enlarged information has placed before us, as constituting the actual state of a prodigious mass of human existence, an exhibition of such things, as it would have seemed to require a super-human genius for inventing shapes of degradation and absurdity to have figured as dreams of fancy.

There is much in the Hindoo system that is strikingly peculiar; but as it is the substantial greatness of the evil, rather than its specific discriminations, that requires to be presented to the view of christian zeal, much of the stress of our brief observations will be laid on properties which are common to this with the other principal modes of paganism. The object is rather to display the system in its strength of pernicious operation, than to attempt any explanatory statement of its precise materials or construction. There needs no great length of description, since the communications of missionaries, and various other works published within the last few years, have made all who take any interest in the subject familiarly acquainted with the prominent features of the heathenism of central

Asia. As for the possible attainment of any thing like a complete knowledge, it may defy all human faculty ; which faculty besides, if it might search the universe for choice of subjects, could find nothing less worth its efforts for knowledge. The system, if so it is to be called, appears, to a cursory inquirer at least, an utter chaos, without top, or bottom, or centre, or any dimension or proportion belonging either to matter or mind, and consisting of materials which certainly deserve no better order. It gives one the idea of immensity filled with what is not of the value of an atom. It is the most remarkable exemplification of the possibility of making the grandest ideas contemptible by conjunction ; for that of infinity is here combined with the very abstract of worthlessness.

But, deserving of all contempt as it is, regarded merely as a farrago of notions and fantasies, it becomes a thing for detestation and earnest hostility when viewed in its practical light, as the governing scheme of principles and rites to a large portion of our race. Consider that there is thus acting upon them, as religion, a system which is in nearly all its properties that which the true religion *is not*, and in many of them the exact reverse. Look at your religion, presented in its bright attributes before you, reflecting those of its Au-

thor ; and then realize to your minds, as far as you can, the condition of so many millions of human spirits receiving, without intermission, from infancy to the hour of death, the full influence of the direct opposites to these divine principles,—a contrast of condition but faintly typified by that between the Israelites and the Egyptians in beholding, on the different sides, the pillar in its appearance over the Red Sea. Consider in comparison the intellectual and moral systems under which we and they are passing forward to another world. While ours has, as its solar light and glory, the doctrine of One Being in whom all perfections are united and infinite, theirs scatters that which is the most precious and vital sentiment of the human soul and of any created intelligence, that is, the affection which regards Deity, to an indefinite multitude and diversity of adored objects ;* the one system carrying the spirit downward to

* A faded trace of primeval truth remains in their theology, in a certain inane notion of a Supreme Spirit, distinguished from the infinity of personifications on which the religious sentiment is wasted, and from those few transcendent demon figures which proudly stand out from the insignificance of the swarm. But it is unnecessary to say, that this notion, a thin remote abstraction, as a mere *nebula* in the Hindoo heaven, is quite inefficient for shedding one salutary ray on the spirits infatuated with all that is trivial and gross in superstition.

utter debasement through that very element of feeling in which it should be exalted, while the other, when in full influence, bears it upward through all things that combine to degrade it. The relation subsisting between man and the Divinity, as unfolded to view in the true religion, is of a simple and solemn character ; whereas the Brahminical theory exhibits this relation in an infinitely confounded, fantastic, vexatious, and ludicrous complexity. While in the christian system the future state of man is declared with the same dignified simplicity, the opposed paganism, between some inane dream of an aspiring mysticism on the one hand, and the paltriest conceits of a reptile invention on the other, presents, we might say sports, this sublime doctrine and fact in the shapes of whimsey and riddle. Ours is an economy according to which religion, considered as in its human subjects, consists in a state of the mind instead of exterior formalities ; the institutes of the Hindoos make it chiefly consist in a miraculously multiplied and ramified set of ritual fooleries. It is almost superfluous to notice in the comparison, that while the one enjoins and promotes a perfect morality, the other essentially favours, and even formally sanctions, the worst vices. It may suffice to add, that while the true religion knows no-

thing of any precedence in the Divine estimate and regard, of one class of human creatures before another, in virtue of nativity or any mere natural distinction, the superstition we are describing has rested very much of its power upon a classification according to which one considerable proportion of the people are, by the very circumstance of their birth, morally distinguished as holy and venerable, and another more numerous proportion, as base and contemptible, sprung from the feet of the creating god, that they might be slaves to the tribe which had the luck and honour to spring from his head.

Such is this aggregate of perversions of all thought, and feeling, and practice. And yet, the system, *being religion*, acts on its subjects with that kind of power which is appropriate and peculiar to religion. The sense which man, by the very constitution of his nature, has of the existence of some super-human power, is one of the strongest principles of that nature; whatever, therefore, takes effectual hold of this sense will go far toward acquiring the regency of his moral being. This conjunction of so many delusions does take possession of this sense in the minds of the Hindoos, with a mightier force than probably we see in any other exhibition of the occupancy of religion, on a wide scale, in

the world. But to the power which the superstition has in thus taking hold of the religious sense, is to be added that which it acquires by another and a dreadful adaptation; for it takes hold also, as with more numerous hands than those given to some of the deities, of all the corrupt principles of the heart. What an awful consideration, that among a race of rational creatures a religion should be mighty almost to omnipotence by means, in a great measure, of its favourable-ness to evil! What a melancholy display of man, that the two contrasted visitants to the world, the one from heaven, the other deserving by its qualities to have its origin referred to hell,—that these two coming to make trial of their respective adaptations and affinities upon human spirits, the infernal one should find free admission, through congeniality, to the possession of the whole souls of immense multitudes, while the one from heaven should but obtain in individuals, here and there, a possession which is partial at the best, and to be maintained by a conflict to the end of life against implacably repugnant principles in the mind. Well may a christian be affected with the most humiliating emotion, both for his race and himself, while he reflects,—I have a nature which might have yielded itself *entire* to a false religion, but so reluct-

antly and partially surrenders itself to the true one, as to retain me in the condition of having it for the chief concern of my life and prayers that the still opposing dispositions may be subdued.

We may assume it as a fact, too obvious to need illustration in particulars, that this superstition, while it commands the faith of its subjects, completes its power over them by its accordance to their pride, malevolence, sensuality, and deceitfulness; to that natural concomitant of pride, the baseness which is ready to prostrate itself in homage to any thing that shall put itself in place of God; and to that interest which criminals feel to transfer their own accountableness upon the powers above them. But then think what a condition for human creatures: they believe in a religion which invigorates, by coincidence and sanction, those principles in their nature which the true religion is intended to destroy; and in return, those principles thus strengthened contribute to confirm their faith in the religion. The mischief inflicted becomes the most effectual persuasion to confidence in the inflicter.

Observe, again, the power possessed by this stupendous delusion in having direct hold on the senses, in so many ways, even exclusively of the grosser means, (the grossest pos-

sible, as you are apprised,) of which it avails itself to please them. It has infused itself, as it were, into numberless visible objects, whence it emanates in a continual influence on the mind through the senses, having made these objects expressive and representative of religious ideas. All the vain notions of the superstition thus stand embodied before its devotees in material phenomena, which are informed with a significance that seems to look at them and speak to them. Presented to them in these sensible types, those delusive ideas occupy their faculties sooner, almost, than they can think, more constantly than they think, and in a mode of possession stronger than mere thought. Indeed it is a mode of possession which, (after faith has grown into the habit of the mind,) may be effectual on the feelings though thought be wanting; for we may presume that in India, as in other places, when external forms and shows have been admitted as symbols of subjects of belief, they may preserve in the people much of the moral habitude appropriate to that belief, even at times when there is no strictly intellectual apprehension. The Hindoo is under the influence of this enchantment upon his senses, almost wherever the christian remonstrant against the dogmas and rites of his superstition can approach him, seeking

access to his reason and conscience. The man thus attempting may have read idle fictions of magical spells, which obstruct the passing of some line, or preclude entrance at a gate; but here he may perceive a *real* intervening magic, between the truth he brings, and the intellectual and moral faculties into which he wishes to introduce it. In his missionary progress among the people, perhaps he shall address them where there is in sight some votive object, some consecrated relic, or the tomb of some revered impostor; things which being connected, in their apprehension, as closely with religion as their garments are with their persons, will impress the assurance that the religion of which the emblems are present, is present itself; that is to say, that it is a reality, of which every thing adorable or fearful is at that instant impending in menacing authority over them. A thing inconsiderable in itself, firmly associated with an invisible greater thing as its sign, may have the effect not only of reminding of that greater, but of aggravating the sense of both its reality and importance.

His next address may be uttered in the vicinity of a temple, which, if in ruins, seems to tell but so much the more impressively, by that image and sign of antiquity, at what a remote and solemn distance of time that

was the religion which they feel to be the religion still; if undilapidated and continuing in its sacred use, overawes their minds with the mysterious solemnities of its unviolated sanctuary; while the sculptured shapes and actions of divinities, overspreading the exterior of the structure, have nothing in their impotent and monstrous device and clumsy execution to abate the reverence of Hindoo devotion toward the objects expressed in this visible language. The missionary, if an acute observer, might perceive how rays of malignant influence strike from such objects upon the faculties of his auditors, to be as it were reflected in their looks of disbelief and disdain upon the preacher of the new doctrine. What a strength of guardianship is thus arrayed in the very senses of the pagan, for the fables, lying doctrines, and immoral principles, established in his faith!

Or we may suppose the protester in the name of the true God to be led to the scene of one of the grand periodical celebrations of the extraordinary rites of idolatry. There, as at the temple of Jaggernaut, contemplating the effect of an intense fanaticism, glowing through an almost infinite crowd, he may perceive that each individual mind is the more fitted, by being heated in this infernal furnace, to har-

den in a more decided form and stamp of idolatry as it cools.

The very riches of nature, the conformations and productions of the elements, cooperate in this mighty tyranny over the mind by occupancy of the senses. Divinity, while degraded in human conception of it, in being diffused through these objects, comes, at the same time, with a more immediate impression of presence, when flowers, trees, animals, rivers, present themselves, not as effects and illustrations, but often as substantial participants, or at least sacred vehicles, of that sublimest existence, and the whole surrounding physical world is one vast mythology, an omnipresent fallacy. In praying that the region may be cleared of idol gods, the missionary might feel the question suggested whether he is not repeating Elijah's prayer for the withholding of rain, which would certainly do much toward vacating the pantheon, by the destruction of the flowers, trees, animals, and streams.

This great enemy, against which we are wishing to excite christian zeal, is "mighty" in the strength of venerable antiquity. Antiquity is, all over the world, the favourite resource of that which is without rational evidence; especially so, therefore, of supersti-

tion ; and the Brahminical superstition rises imperially above all others in assumption of dignity from the past, which it arrogates as all its own, but emphatically that which appears the most solemn by remoteness. Other dominations over human opinion are under the necessity of acknowledging an origin, at a particular period, and in comparative insignificance ; and have had to attain their due honours by a slowly enlarging progress downward through time. But this proud imposture, disowning every thing like an infancy, disdaining all idea of having ever been less and afterwards greater, and defying all computation of time, makes the past, back to an inconceivable distance, the peculiar scene of its magnificence. And it teaches its devotees to regard its continued presence on earth not as the progress of a cause advancing and brightening into greatness and triumph, but merely as something of the radiance reaching thus far, and with fainter splendour, from that glory so divine in the remote past. Its primeval manifestation was of such power as to prolong the effect even to this late period, in which the faithful worshippers have to look back so far to behold the glory of that vision it once condescended to unfold on this world. The grand point of attraction being thus placed in a past so stupendous as to assume

almost a character of eternity, the contemplations, the devotional feelings, and the self-complacency, are drawn away in a retrospective direction, and leave behind in contempt all modern inventions of faith or institution, as the insignificant follies sprung from the corruption of a heaven-abandoned period of time. The sentiments excited in them by the many signs of decay in the exterior apparatus of their system, such as the ruined state of innumerable temples, will rather coincide with this attraction in carrying the homage and the pride to the glory that was once, than lead to any suspicion of a futility for which the system deserves to grow out of use. This retrospective magnitude, this absorption of all past duration in their religion, this reduction to insignificance of whatever else has existed, (if, indeed, all that has existed has not been comprehended in it,) cannot fail to produce a degree of elation in the minds of the Hindoos, notwithstanding their incapability of genuine sublimity of conception and emotion.

And again, however slight their affections toward their contemporary relatives, the idea of an ancestry extending back through unnumbered generations, all having had their whole intellectual and moral existence involved inseparably in their religion, and surrendering in succession their souls to become

a kind of guardians or portions of it, must add a more vital principle of attraction to the majestic authority and sanction of such an antiquity. Generations of little account in their own times may acquire, when passed away to be contemplated as ancestry, a certain power over the imagination by becoming invested with something of the character of another world,—a venerableness which combines with and augments the interest which they hold in our thoughts as having once belonged to our mortal fraternity. This combined interest going wholly into the sentiments of religion, in the pagans of whom we speak, they will feel as if a violation of that would be an insult to each of the innumerable souls of the great religious family departed, all worthier of respect than any that are now living in the world from which they have vanished. This habitual reference to their ancestors, with a certain sense of responsibility, is maintained by various notions and rites of their superstition, expressly contrived for the purpose ; as well as by the pride which they can all feel, though they be but little sensible to the kind of poetical charm which might be felt, in thus standing connected, through identity of religious character and economy, with the remotest antiquity.

Nor can the influence be small, in the way

of confirmed sanction and cherished pride, of beholding that which has been the element of the moral existence of an almost infinite train of predecessors, attested still, as to its most material parts, by a world of beings at this hour coinciding with the devotee in regarding it as their honour, their sanctity, and their supreme law. Let the Hindoo direct his attention or his travels whichever way he will, within the circuit of a thousand leagues, he meets with a crowding succession, without end, of living thinking creatures who, notwithstanding many capricious diversifications of their general faith, live but to believe and act as he does with regard to the most revered of its impositions. And what, in effect, do they all think and act so for, but as evidence that he is right? The mind can rest its assurance of its own rectitude of persuasion on this wide concurrence of belief, without therefore acknowledging to itself a degrading dependence. Its mode of seeing the matter is, not that the faith of a large assemblage of other minds is *its* faith, but that its faith is *theirs*; not—I think and act as they do, but, They think and act as I do. This sort of ambitious expansion outward, from the individual as a centre, saves his pride of reason from being humiliated by the consideration of the sameness of his notions with those of the great mass.

The sense of community in human nature is strongly and delightfully admitted, when agreeing multitudes corroborate a man's opinions without depriving him of the self-complacency of believing that he holds them in the strength of his own wisdom.

This corroborating influence of the consent of contemporary multitude in the most essential points of the system, has, as we have already hinted, its effect among the Hindoos even without the intervention of social affection. Never did any where a great number of human creatures exist together with so little of the attachments of kindred and friendship. It is a striking illustration of the tendency of their superstition, that it nearly abolishes these interests, keeping the whole population in the state of detached and most selfish particles. This seems indeed to be foregoing one of the strongest means of power, since a system of notions and moral principles might find the greatest account in so combining itself with the affections of nature as to engage them for auxiliaries. But then what a triumph of this bad cause, that while, instead of enticing these charities into its service, it tramples on and destroys them, it can notwithstanding make this assemblage of dissocial selfish beings act upon one another in confirmation of their common delusion, with

an effect even greater than that which might have arisen from friendly sympathy. Of little worth in one another's esteem as relatives and friends, it is as things which the gods have set their stamp upon that they have their grand value. The religion is accounted to inhabit, in so very formal a mode of existence, the persons of all its subjects, that they have the effect of figures sculptured on their temples, or of leaves of their sacred books of mythology. The seal or brand of the deities set upon them does not indeed *dignify* them all, but it makes them all vouchers to the religion. They all in conjunction personify, as it were, that system which as much requires the existence of Soodras to verify it as of Brahmins. The "miry clay" of the feet is as essential a part as the royal material of the head.

Thus the vast multitude are made to serve just as surety to one another, and all to each, for the verity of the superstition. And as the existence of any of them on any other account had been impertinent, their existence in such prodigious numbers must needs seem to demonstrate a mighty importance in that for evidence and exemplification of which it was worth while for them to be so many.

With so despotic a command over the people's minds, it would have been strange if

this empire of delusion had forborne to assume the advantage and security of those temporalities, which no other spiritual tyranny was ever abstracted enough to forget, and which, indeed, it would have been a foolish impolicy to forego. Indirectly, it possesses this mode of strength in having for its subjects the princely and opulent persons of the community. Their secular rank renders service, not only by its natural influence on the people of lower condition, but by the homage of an acknowledged intrinsic inferiority of that rank to the highest of the distinctions founded in religion. Their mansions, gardens, and groves, are made to testify, by all the permanent signs of dedication, that their property and state are held under the paramount rights of the divinities. But these divinities have also their direct revenues, in the shape of fixed and many of them ancient appropriations ; with the addition of an undefined right of exaction, enforced by priests and consecrated mendicants upon the religious charity of the people. This charity is in one sense voluntary ; but when it is considered with what lofty pretensions these applicants make their demands, (not unfrequently even assuming some mode of identity with the gods themselves,) and what benefits or curses are declared, and by the

people believed, to depend infallibly on their surrendering or withholding the tribute required, it is easy to judge how much these offerings, and their quantity, are left to free will.

Their own rights and those of their idols might be trusted, for the power of maintaining them, to men whose demands of a share of the superstitious cultivator's produce are to be resisted at the believed hazard of a blast on the whole. As if, however, both such endowments, and such force of requisition, had left cause to fear that this infernal hierarchy should become deficient in the substantial resources for preserving its dominion of delusion and iniquity, the Christian Government over India has sought the honour of being its auxiliary; in which capacity it is at once accepted and despised by the descendants of Brahma. The aid has been afforded not simply in the way of securing, in observance of the principle of toleration, the pagan worship and means of worship from violent interference, but in the form of a positive active patronage. The administration of the funds for the ceremonial and abominations of idolatry, has been, to a very great extent, taken under the authority and care of the reigning power, composed of persons zealous on this nearer side of a certain extent of water for the estab-

lished christian religion, which establishment has also been recently extended to that further side,—with what effect toward exploding, or even modifying, this very marvellous policy, or whether deemed to be perfectly harmonious with it, we must wait to be informed.*

In the mean time, the religious public are amply informed of a course of measures having been deliberately pursued tending to sup-

* The writer has been told, that certain readers have taken offence at something in this passage. He cannot well understand why; and perhaps those readers would not be much disposed to explain. The two facts are, that the government, that is the government of England, have adopted a policy of superintending and patronizing the idolatrous establishments in India; and that, while systematically pursuing this policy, they have also appointed and endowed a Christian Ecclesiastical Establishment there. Now, they do, or they do not, consider this measure of establishing a christian national church there as compatible, consistent, harmonious, with that policy of sanctioning idolatry. Do they, or do they not? Which part of the alternative to assume, it may not be very easy for candour to decide.—As to the fact of the systematic policy in question, it has been formally stated, or incidentally mentioned, in several publications relating to India. But whoever may wish to see it exposed in its full extent and evidence, may find it, (but indeed many of our readers must well remember it,) in a long and very able and important article in the 12th volume of the *Christian Observer*, (the numbers for October and November, 1813.) We do not hear of any change having taken place in the system.

port and prolong the ascendancy of paganism. It has been disclosed to their view that the highest authority has taken upon itself the regulation of the economy of idols' temples, has restored endowments which had been alienated, and has made additional allowances from the public revenue, where the existing appropriations have been judged inadequate to preserve to those establishments the requisite dignity;—requisite for what, but to prevent any relaxation of the hold which the imposture has on the people? And, be it remembered, the revenue which is to afford this aid is constantly pressing heavily for its means of competence on the distressed resources of this christian country.

We cannot presume to conjecture how much sooner this accessional mean of power will begin to fail, than those ancient ones, with which the system was invested when none of its gods or sages could have foreseen a reserve of assistance in such a quarter. Perhaps a confidence,—entertained upon the assurance of that “lying spirit” whose prophets were once before trusted in by a government,—a confidence that this pagan system will be permanent, contributes to prevent any alarm respecting the judicial notice, which the Governor of the world might

take of its christian supporters, in the event of his striking it down.

If we add to all these modes and causes of the mightiness of this superstition, the indefatigable activity of the powers of darkness, meaning literally, infernal intelligences, which we believe to be busy in this world, it might be readily admitted, we should imagine, that there is nothing in it worthier to have sprung from the inspiration, or to be kept in force by the energy, of such malignity and agency. If there are theologians who deny the intervention of such a cause in this enormity of evil, is it, perhaps, that they feel some need and use of its being laid to the sole account of man, for supporting that other favourite opinion of theirs, which denies the radical corruption of his nature?—What new hopes, or consistencies, or facilities, for the prosecution of this warfare, might be afforded by their view of the matter, which makes the human nature to be so excellent, and makes all this to be its spontaneous product, it would be of no use for us to stay to inquire; since it is our destiny to proceed in the contest under the notion, that such magnitude of evil can be no less than the leagued depravity of *two* bad natures. Those who can ascribe it all to one, and at the same time entertain a high veneration for that one, would seem to make

no very contemptible approximation, in point of rationality, toward the idolatry of which we have been speaking.

Now, can a system of intellectual and moral perversion, of which the demoniac strength is but slightly developed in this brief description of some of its characteristics, shew itself in the view of the adherents of the true religion, without conveying a provocation to their conscience and zeal to come forth, in aid of any reasonable project for carrying a new power into attack on what has, through so many ages, maintained its character of a defier of the living God, in spite of all that might have been supposed to operate toward its destruction from time, and Nature, and the vaunted reason of man? Those who partake of the spirit of Elijah, and are "very jealous for the Lord of Hosts," will wish that good men might be moved to conspire in an unanimous hostility, which shall be carried into effect through being sent up as a devout service and appeal to heaven, to be thence returned, (for it is in this reflected power that christian zeal has its efficacy,) to be thence returned, as in burning rays, to scorch and blast, here and there, the extended array of idolatry, and at length to annihilate it. But, in thinking of such a conspiring zeal, thus reflected with an intensity not its own, to consume the mass of abomination, it is for

each one to ask within himself, Is there not in that system, made up of so many depravities, some small part, some poisonous atom, some serpent vehicle of an evil principle, which *I* may be, through the same divine force imparted in its measure to the humblest individual's effort, the means of destroying? And that minute portion of active principle, which noxiously works on in consequence of my not crushing it,—may it not be accounted to work in my name, making my contribution, real however diminutive, to the deadly effect of that system which *I might* contribute just so much to abolish? But even though the state of the matter were, that no actual effect at all should result, none discernible by Him who discriminates every thing included in all things, still, might I not be required, in mere proof of my fidelity to him, to give some demonstration of hatred, to fling some practical salutation of war, against an infernal monster that, in character of a constellation of gods, arrogates the worship of a large portion of the human race, and repays it with perdition? Can I hope to go, without some haunting sense of dishonour, to that superior empire of the Almighty where every *possible* sentiment of devotion is in actual excitement, from a region where I have been nearly at peace with such an odious usurpation?

But even this state of peace with it has not

been enough for some of our countrymen to maintain : and we think the partiality, arising in some instances almost to fanaticism, which, both at home and abroad, they have manifested without reserve for this grossest paganism, may serve to enforce our demand on christian zeal. It may do so, partly, by the illustration thus afforded of the quality of the design, since that may be presumed to be greatly excellent which has had the exact effect of irritating out by contrariety the worst vice lurking in profane minds ; and it may additionally do so by the consideration, that if a peculiarly odious kind of depravity, of the existence of which there was perhaps no previous suspicion, suddenly discloses itself in a nation, there should be an extraordinary effort to promote a counterbalancing good. Such an effort, besides that it is due to the honour of God, would seem to be called for in behalf of the *character* of a christian people. It may also involve somewhat of that policy, in reference to their welfare, which sober men would not easily pronounce superstitious as exemplified in the parallel case of a ship, in which, if several of the passengers were expressly and ravingly insulting Omnipotence, any others, fearing the “ God of the sea and the dry land,” would consider an extraordinary degree of homage rendered to him on their part, in direct contravention, a matter

not altogether foreign to the safety of the vessel. If their devotions had been, in the first instance, the cause of bringing out this malignant impiety, they would be certain, upon the exhibition of it, rather to double than remit the earnestness and frequency of their prayers.

The promoters and immediate experimenters of a christian attempt on the pagans of the East naturally expected, in spite of the pretended miraculous mildness of the Hindoo character, to encounter a strenuous and perhaps malicious opposition from the idolaters. But it was hardly within their calculation, that a very considerable number of persons of some note in England,—men enjoying the advantages of education; of weight in the legislation, the mercantile system, and the literature, of the country; belonging to its respected ranks, classes, and professions; and avowing, for the most part, a veneration for the religious establishment;—would be provoked to join in a violent outcry against a scheme for imparting the gospel to the people of India. Still less was it anticipated of what strain the only music in this clamour was to be; that the virulent invective against the “pernicious fanaticism” of missionary enterprise would ever and anon be heard modulating itself to an expression of indulgent partiality toward the execrable superstition threatened

by that enterprise. There had not been in this country so free a display of every infidel propensity as to render it a matter of familiar observation, that men who hate the intrusion of a divine jurisdiction are much inclined to regard with favour a mode of pretended religion which they can make light of as devoid of all real authority. They are so inclined because, through its generic quality, (of religion,) it somewhat assists them to make light also of a more formidable thing of that quality and name. It comes, probably, with a great show of claims,—antiquity, pretended miracles, and an immense number of believers: it may nevertheless be disbelieved with most certain impunity. Under the encouragement of this disbelief with impunity, the mind ventures to look toward other religions, and at last toward the Christian. *That* also has its antiquity, its recorded miracles, and its multitude of believers. Though there may not, perhaps, be impious assurance enough to assume formally the equality of the pretensions in the two cases, there is a successful eagerness to escape from the evidence that the apparent similarity is superficial, and the real difference infinite; and the irreligious spirit springs rapidly and gladly, in its disbelief, from the one, as a stepping-place, to the other. But that which affords such an important convenience for surmounting the awe of

the true religion, will naturally be a great favourite, even at the very moment it is seen to be contemptible, and indeed, in a sense, *in consequence* of its being so. Complacency mingles with the very contempt for that from which contempt may rebound on christianity.

These fierce advocates of paganism it were in vain to warn of a time, when the summons to them will be, in effect, to “come forth *against* the Lord,” if they dare then repeat their well remembered words of reverence for idolatry;* a time when their impious affectation of liberal homage to all “religions,” as proper and useful for their respective parts of the world, will give place to the insufferable conviction of having insultingly rejected that infinite good which only one had to offer; and when their contemptuous disallowance of any higher rule of judging and proceeding with respect to a people’s religion, than the consideration of how it may affect government and commerce, will come to be estimated and pronounced upon, in a scene where all worldly policy will be at an end—excepting in its retribution; and where so

* The most furious of them, a person under a military designation, is dead since this was written. The most jocular, vulgar, and far enough from least malicious, of the revilers of the design for converting the idolaters, a person with the ecclesiastical prefix to his name, still lives.

many millions will be awaiting that consignment, whatever it may be, for which they will have grown to a fitness as subjects of a false and depraving religion. Then will such men meet their account with the fabricators and imposers of false religions to serve their ambition, with apostates, and whatever other enemies of Christ will hear with despair the sentence, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." It can be of no use, we repeat, to admonish *them*; but we may urge it on the friends of true religion and the illumination of the world, that to this phenomenon of a zealous avowal and effort in favour of paganism, in this christian country, in this stage of its knowledge, their contrary zeal and exertion should be what the living rod of Moses was to the serpents of the magicians.

It is at the same time to be acknowledged, that there is a great abatement of the public manifestation of this disposition to vindicate idolatry, and this animosity against all attempts to reduce its dominion. However unallayed the rancorous sentiment may remain, it has been found that its unqualified exposure is a little incommodious on the score of character. Indeed, in the season of its most virulent eruption, some of the persons in whom it raged thought it worth while, (others were more bold or honest,) to endeavour to

give it a disguised appearance. It was made to inspirit some argument of pretended political expediency. It was vented under the form of a representation, urged with every seeming of a most sincere and wrathful earnestness, that missionary proceedings, permitted but a very little while longer, would infallibly work the destruction of the British empire in Asia ; although it is probable that some of these malignants laughed in private at such as might be simple enough to let themselves become, upon this representation, affected with this panic. Such assertions were hazarded in a sanguine confidence, for which it is a lamentable reflection on our country that there should have been no slight grounds, that the matter would not be suffered to proceed to the trial. But a power from heaven interposed, acting partly by the instrumentality of the zeal of the religious part of the community ; the Government were decided to prolong the impunity of the reviled missionaries, which authority in their favour has silenced many that were incapable of feeling any restraint from the fear of God ; and time and experience have brought contempt on all their rant of prognostication.

We have alluded to such men, only to gain from them a service for which we shall owe them no thanks. Religion should keep pace

with physical science in the art of making noxious things contribute to salutary operations. No bad moral force, if it cannot be annihilated, should be left free from attempts to cheat it into a contrary action to what it naturally intends; and we wish to make the force of evil, emitted from these men's minds, act in coincident impulse with the motives which should carry the servants of God into a closer and still more animated conflict with the powers of heathen darkness.

This good cause has prevailed on the judgment, and obtained the practical aid, of the religious public, to an extent which we are willing to regard as an omen from heaven, of great effects to be accomplished in its progress. But it is not improbable there may still remain, among a minority of good men, some feelings not quite reconciled to schemes of such wide scope, such interminable demands of assistance, and such a distant field of execution; schemes, too, which cannot be named but as amidst the echo of ten thousand voices of men in repute for sense hardly yet ceasing to pronounce them chimerical and fanatical; schemes but partially emerging from that general ridicule which leaves, though abated, such marks upon an object, that most men are long ashamed to entertain it.

There is much difference of mental constitution for receiving the impression of such projects. There is a class of good men naturally formed to be exceedingly sober, and cautious, and deliberate, and anxious for all things to be kept in right proportions and manageable compass. Excellent qualities; adapted specifically to some departments of duty, and of great use in a certain measure of interference in all. But let it be suggested to their possessors, that there is perhaps no class of men so apt to overvalue their peculiar endowments, in contradistinction to those of a different order; and no class more needing to be warned of the faults akin to their virtues, and into which those virtues are liable to be insensibly transmuted. Nor, while they are in an especial manner ready to take credit to themselves for independence of judgment, are there any good men whose feelings and opinions are more at the mercy of those from whom they differ, no class being liable to be driven further on one side the middle line, in a concern of duty, by what appears to them an extreme on the other. And in their own extreme, when they have once taken their position there, they will maintain themselves with all that stiffness of temper which, to deserve the name of firmness or independence, ought to have kept them out of it.

It may be conceded to these worthy men, that the advocates of missions have not always avoided extravagance. Especially when under the influence of a large assembly, supposed to be animated by interests which extend to the happiness of a world, they may have been excited to use a language which seemed to magnify these interests, and the projects in which they were embodied, at the expense of all other duties and concerns ; insomuch that some of those extra prudent friends of ours, in the auditory, have been wondering what, at that rate of devotement of time, exertion, and money, we are to do, not only with the other claims of religious duty, but with the whole ordinary economy of life, pressing upon us as it does with so many peremptory demands. But allowance must be made for a little excess in the pleader of such a cause. Its great importance, of which he is at all times soberly certain, expands into a kind of dazzling magnificence before him when a multitude of minds seem to be contemplating it in sympathy with him. It appears to him as bright with a reflection of all the complacent regards which those minds are fixing upon it. Under such a temporary animating influence, all the topics and arguments which he has previously accumulated in favour of the selected subject, be-

come as it were dilated and on fire, without any intentional exaggeration ; and unless he had a capacity, like Bacon, of keeping all subjects within his view almost at once, in their relative proportions as in a map, he will naturally represent the claims of the selected one in terms partaking a little too much of ambition and monopoly. We cannot wonder that our calculating friends should be making, in their minds, a strong protest against this excess ; but they are aware how little they need entertain any apprehension for its consequences ; as well knowing that the persons addressed are never betrayed into such enthusiasm, as to forget to take the practical standard of their duty at a sufficient reduction of the requirement made or implied in the hyperbolical language of the advocate.

While, however, some concession is thus made to the cautious good men, who are more afraid of extravagance than of all other errors in designs for promoting religion, they must be told, that it would have been an ill fate for christianity in the world, if christians of their temperament could always have held the ascendancy in projecting its operations. If they would for a moment put themselves, in imagination, in the case of being contemporary with Wicliff, or with Luther, and of being applied to by one of these daring spirits for ad-

vice, we may ask what counsel they can suppose themselves to have given. They cannot but be instantly conscious that, though they had been protestants at heart, their disposition would have been to array and magnify the objections and dangers ; to dwell in emphatic terms on the inveterate, all-comprehensive, and resistless dominion of the papal church, established in every soul and body of the people ; on the vigilance and prompt malignity of the priests ; and on the insignificance, as to any probable effect, of an obscure individual's efforts against an immense and marvellously well organized system of imposture and iniquity,—even were it not the extreme of folly not to foresee that his protestation would soon bring him to encounter the *ultima ratio* of his provoked enemy, in the form of tribunals, dungeons, and death. In short, if in those instances such counsel had been acted upon as they would have given, that zeal which was kindling and destined to lay a great part of the mightier Babylon in ashes, would have smouldered and expired in a languid listless hope, that the Almighty would *sometime* create such a juncture of circumstances as should admit an attempt at reformation without a culpable and useless temerity. And so we might, for Wicliff and Luther, have been worshipping waxen toys,

and trusting our most momentous interests on the strength of penances, absolutions, and ceremonial antics, at this very day.

And to descend to the undertaking now under consideration; — all that has been accomplished by it in India, and is now accomplishing, as introductory, we trust, to a religious change not less glorious or extensive than the Reformation, may be regarded by its active friends as, in some sense, a reward for having refused to be controlled by the dissuasive arguments, and desponding predictions, of many very worthy deprecators of rashness and enthusiasm.

It is from such a quarter that we may hear disapprobation conveyed in the question, What can *we* do against an evil of such enormous magnitude, and so consolidated? It may be answered, (as it has been already suggested,) What you can do, if the expression means what precise quantity of effect a severe calculation may promise from a given effort, is not always to be the rule of conduct; for this would be to deny the absolute authority of the Divine Master. We refuse to obey him for his own sake, if we assume to place the governing reason for all the services we are to render in a judgment which we think we can ourselves form whether they will accomplish an end worth the labour, and

therefore to fix their limit at the point beyond which we cannot with confidence extend our calculations. Such an arrogant impiety carried to its full length, would at last demand of him that he should require *no* service without placing clearly within our view all those consequences of it on which his own just reasons for exacting it are founded. That is, it would become a demand to be exempted from all services whatever.

It is the very contrary spirit to this of restrictive parsimonious calculation that has been the most signally honoured; inasmuch as some of the most effectual and of the noblest services rendered to God in all time, have begun much more in the prompting of zeal to attempt something for him as it were at all hazards, than in rigorous estimates of the probable measure of effect.

Let it be observed also, how all history abounds with great ultimate consequences from little causes; in which fact it only declares and exemplifies a prevailing law in the constitution of the world; a law by which the diminutive grows to the large, sparks flame into conflagrations, fountains originate mighty streams, and most inconsiderable moral agents and actions are made the incipient points whence trains of agencies and effects, proceeding on with continual accession, en-

large into effects of immense magnitude. Some of these great results, now forming most important circumstances and modifications in the state of the human race, bear on them a peculiarity of character which will hardly allow us to look at them without a reference in thought to the points whence the progression began. They appear, notwithstanding their extension, with a certain prominence and distinctness by which we are reminded of their history; while others are become so diffused and blended into the general conformation of things, that their own distinguishable colour, so to speak, does not remain obvious enough to excite readily or necessarily any thought of them as effects which may be retrospectively traced to precise points, where their causes first sprung into action. Much of the actual condition of our part of the world consists of a number of these grand results of enlarging trains of effects, progressive from the smallest beginnings at various distances back in the past. And were not these now wide-spread results so combined into one order of things and familiarized around us, and were not, besides, the history of them so deficient and confused, it might very often be a pleasing employment, for both the philosophic and the devout mind, to trace them backward to the diminu-

tiveness in which they began. A mysterious hand threw a particle of a cause, if we may express it so, among the elements; it had the principle of attraction in it; it found something akin to it to combine with, obtaining so an augmentation, to be instantly again augmented, of the attracting and assimilating power, which grew in a ratio that became at length stupendous; and it exhibits the final result, (if any result yet attained could be called final,) in something, perhaps, which now forms the most important distinction and advantage of a nation, or of a still larger section of the world. What was the commencement of the true religion in this land, and of those several reformatations which have partly restored it from its corruptions? And what would be the term of proportion, according to our principles of judging, between the object as seen in the diminutiveness of the incipient cause, and in its present extent of prevalence?—between, (if we may be allowed the figure,) the germ in the acorn and the majestic oak?

A result thus growing to an immense magnitude from an original cause apparently so insignificant, is the collective consequence of a great number of causes progressively starting and multiplying into consentaneous operation, each of them having in the same

manner its appropriate enlarging series of consequences, still uniting with the one great process. And in looking to the future progress of an undertaking for diffusing christianity in India, is it not perfectly rational to presume, that many small means and little events will be, in their respective times and places, the commencements, and in a sense the causes, of trains of consequences interminably advancing and enlarging?

For example, we may imagine the destiny of some particular copy of the Bible or New Testament, in one of the native languages; and a strange interest would attach to such a volume, could there be any sign to indicate this destiny, at the moment of its issuing from the repository. It may be supposed to come into the hands, in a way much like casualty, of a heathen somewhat more thoughtful than his companions. Disgust or indignation at the first aspect of what he finds there may prompt him to throw away the book, which he may perceive to be virtually an impeachment of his religion, his gods, his priests, and himself. But a certain disquiet, of curiosity mingled with a deeper sentiment, shall have seized him, and shall impel him irresistibly to that book again: he shall feel as if the eye of a spectre had glanced upon him, and stricken him with a fascination that com-

pels him to follow whether he will or not. A rising suspicion that all within him, and around him, may have been wrong, shall be aggravated, by repeated perusal, to full conviction; while the dawn of the true light and of a happier state is breaking on the night of his soul. Communications and discussions with his relatives and neighbours may accompany the latter part of this process; and his finally complete persuasion will be followed by zealous exertions to impart what he will deem the greatest good on earth. The vast majority will obdurately resist; but within a year he shall find one or two, and in the next several more, surrendering to the same convictions, and then, as it were instinctively, unfolding their new faith as a net for proselytes. Who shall presume to say what the consequence may not be in fifty or in thirty years? Which of our *christian* deriders of the madness of missionary hopes, would venture to pledge his fortune for the inviolateness, half a century hence, of those shrines and idols, at present frequented and adored in the district where such a man is perhaps at this hour beginning, by the intrusion of the supposed Bible, to be disturbed in his "unchangeable" notions and rites, as these christians have so often pronounced them?

We may without extravagance suppose

these events to happen in a great number of instances, here and there in that realm of darkness ; and we might add many other diminutive incidents and agents. The possible effects of a few tracts, conveyed in a manner appearing at first unaccountable, to a great distance from the place where they may have been put into pagan hands, by good men little apprised of the dignified appointment with which those humble gifts left their own, has been delightfully exemplified in some of the rather recent accounts of this mission. Among the little causes thus presented to the imagination as destined to produce great effects, will appear some images of the infantine countenances of the pupils now taught, and hereafter to be taught, in those numerous schools brought into existence by the mission, not indeed contrived for proselytizing, as the immediate purpose, but certain to contribute to it indirectly in the course of years.

You are glad to admit how reasonable, how sober, it is to expect that many such apparently inconsiderable things will thus grow to magnitude in the progress of their effects contributory to the success of the good cause. But it will occur to you that, in imagining these diminutive causes, we have not begun quite at their beginning. It is a pleasing thing to see, in the hands of the supposed pagan,

the book or tract which may thus explode his superstition, and perhaps be the cause of ultimately setting his temple and idols on fire; but how is that formidable substance to come, gratuitously, into his hands? Think what must have preceded. Think of the complicated process of its preparation, involving so many kinds of workmanship. And this brings the train of the operation up to its originating matter in your own hands, a commencement so long antecedent to the pagan's receiving the supposed book, the event from which we have dated such pleasing consequences, but on which consequences we are not to be indulging our anticipative gratulations as if the book were to fall from the sky. The little cause, then, which we may follow onward in thought to such noble effects,—see it deriving itself from a still less,—a piece of money; which may have carried its image and superscription, in the insignificance of ordinary service, through a thousand hands, at each movement very harmless to the cause of evil, till it has come into that hand which has devoted it to produce a bible, which may have the effect at length of a thunderbolt on an idol's temple. Here is a direct answer to the question, perhaps querulously asked, What can *we* do?

Should it be said, that such fanciful fictions,

even supposing a certainty that they will be realized, bring no lively incitement, because, the contributions being thrown into a collective sum of means, no one's quota can have any *distinct* operation, no individual can please himself with the idea that *his* particular contribution may be made the point of origination of one of these happy trains,—we would ask, whether it may not be honour enough for the individual to have his *share* in originating whatever such trains of progressive good shall take their rise from the collective contributions of *all*. While this union of the means so contributed makes those who supply them sharers of the loss in all those bibles, those little books, and those cases of the tuition given to juvenile heathens, which shall fail of producing any good, it makes them participators also in all those happy and noble consequences, of which it may be assumed as quite certain that here and there *one* of the bibles, *one* of the tracts, *one* of the instructed heathen children, will be the cause.

This confident belief, that in the prosecution of the enterprise now under consideration, there cannot fail to be some striking instances of particular and apparently inconsiderable means thus rendered productive of distinguished effects, and those effects producing new and greater ones, in a continued

succession enlarging as it advances,—this confidence is authorized, (independently of all other reasons,) by the fact, that such instances *have* occurred in every recorded scheme of christian enterprise which has been prosecuted on a wide scale, from right motives, and with indefatigable perseverance. Not that in all of them there have been such magnificent and prodigious ultimate effects from little causes as we have been describing ; not that in every province of benevolent activity a rill from some little obscure source has swelled into a Nile, and fertilized a whole region ; but in all of them it may be safely asserted that there have been instances, of a magnitude to throw contempt on frigid, indolent, and irreligious calculation.

It is not improbable the chief strength of whatever reluctance may still remain, among the friends of christianity, to yield their full cooperation in projects for sending that religion to supplant the delusion and idolatry of the heathen world, consists in a kind of Religious Fatalism, which would make the objection in some such terms as these ;—If that Being whose power is almighty has willed to permit on earth the protracted existence in opposition to him of this enormous evil, why are *we* called upon to vex and exhaust our-

selves in a petty warfare against it?—why, any more than to attempt the extinction of a volcano? If it were his will that it should be overthrown, we should soon, without having quitted our places and our quiet, in any offensive movement toward it, feel the earthquake of its mighty catastrophe; and if such is *not* his will, then we should plainly be putting ourselves in the predicament of willing something which he does not will, and making exertions which must infallibly prove abortive.

We may question such an objector as to the real length to which his opinion or feeling goes. May it approach to a sentiment like this,—that, the thing contemplated being permitted by him that is infinitely good and powerful, it is therefore *not* of a nature hostile to him, *not* of a tendency directly the reverse of that of his attributes, *not* of deadly malignity to his creatures; that, in short, the brand of divine reprobation stamped by both revelation and reason upon idolatry, and on each of its deceits and depravities severally, is itself, in truth, but a deceit of another kind, a mere accommodation to a certain superficial and conventional theory, the real fact being, after all, that God is at peace with the thing thus reprobated?

We may presume he will instantly reply in

the negative, and say, that he holds this mass of error and turpitude to be intrinsically and immutably opposite to the divine goodness and holiness, and pernicious to man,—any other judgment of the matter being, according to all fact and all scripture, utterly and impiously absurd; and that therefore the divine permission of this great evil appears at every step of thought but the more mysterious.

Well, then, we immediately say to him, there are two views, according to one of which you are to form your scheme of conduct; on the one hand, a mystery in the divine government, a permission infinitely inexplicable to you; and on the other, the most glaring manifestation of the quality of the thing so permitted, as hateful in itself and in the sight of God. Consider from which of these two it is the most rational for you to take your rule of action,—from that where your understanding is utterly lost, or from that where all is demonstration or self-evidence. You have light given you on the nether tract where you are placed, beneath the awful mystery in the heaven above, which interposes darkness between you and the reasons and counsels of the Almighty. By this light you have an infallible manifestation of the infinitely odious nature of an object that

stands before you. What can this light and this manifestation be for, but that you might not have need to look up into the darkness for an authority, from reasons unknown, to determine your sentiments and action? And is it rational, and can it be safe, that the clear evidence which has thus been given, in order to define for you a scheme of duty with the advantage of being independent of the mystery, should be rejected that you may revert to that very mystery for a determination of your duty,—or rather for an authority to conclude that you have none? Or would you, both despising this light and defying that darkness, aspire to surmount the region of mystery itself, ascend into the light around the throne of heaven, and, sharer of Sovereign Intelligence, enter into God's own reasons for permitting the evil? For this indeed, even *this* exaltation of intellect, must be attained, to authorize it as a principle of action that *you* will permit a great moral evil because *God* does so. For *you* to maintain a calm tolerance toward it because *he* does not destroy it, is no less than to yield it an amicable acquiescence, no less therefore than an alliance with his enemy, unless this tolerance is maintained for precisely those reasons, clearly understood, which are his reasons for permitting it.

But perhaps you will say, that far from any tendency to such an alliance, you are, as an indispensable part and proof of your fidelity to God, a mortal foe of this foe to him, in every estimate of your judgment and every sentiment of your heart; and that the only exemption sought, upon the plea of the divine permission of the evil, is, that you may be excused, at least for the present, from active measures, and not be summoned to expend and waste your feeble strength on that which the almighty strength spares.

Now in the first place, there seems to be a groundless assumption implied here, namely the *continuance* of this permission indefinitely into futurity; whereas, for any thing that can be known to you, hostile means put in action at this period may coincide with a divine decree to terminate that mysterious sufferance: and then, whatever were the natural inadequacy of those means, they would seem to have caught the fire of Gideon's lamps, and be made to flame out with supernatural power of rout and confusion to the host of pagan gods.

But in the next place, you cannot consistently acknowledge that the circumstance of the divine permission of this dreadful system of delusion affords no particle of ground for conciliation to it, but leaves you under the full

obligation of a mortal enmity,—and at the same time claim from that circumstance an exemption from practical efforts against it. What indeed is its permission but simply its existence?—in virtue of which there can be no exemption from the duty of attacking it which would not be equally an exemption from all duty whatever in the form of opposition and conflict, which would not confer an universal inviolability on evil, and end practically in the maxim, that the more evil there is in the world, the less there is for the servants of God to do. And yet, you are saying, their *feeling*, in this state of exemption, should be the same as if they had a great deal to do, and a mighty host to fight. With respect at least to the giant evil at present in view, they may remain in inaction, and yet, you admit, ought to glow with the actuating principle. But then of what use is that principle except to disturb their repose? That they should be inflamed, as you acknowledge they ought, against what is working infinite mischief and misery to a large portion of the human race, and yet should in point of action remain at peace with it, would not only be an inconsistency and absurdity, but would also, if a possible case, be an uneasy and mortifying one. Vain passion of christian zeal! illusory and almost penal fire from heaven! animat-

ing the heart but to consume it, if there should be no practical mode and machinery for conveying outward its energy to strike against the hated object. To have the mind beset and filled, as by main force, with the revolting images of pagan abominations, and to know that this infernal usurpation triumphs in the slavery of millions of our common family, and yet, the while, to submit to be unfurnished with expedients of devout revenge; to have no arrows, no power of throwing reflected convergent sun-beams, no missiles charged with the elements most noxious to a malignant nature; would be felt as a hard *imposition* by a man of zeal, who would dread to have his soul, in reference to the service of God, in the condition of a hero in chains. What shall we think, then, of a servant of God desiring as an *exemption* and a *privilege* to be allowed thus to expend away the vital force of his spirit without action? We cannot believe that he *has* any of that zealous emotion which he pretends. No, you must not profess to feel and fulfil a duty of enmity in spirit against the permitted evil, and at the same time acknowledge no duty of offensive exertion. The true animosity would be so intent on some means of action, that it is quite certain the state of feeling which persuades to decline such means is far too pacific to-

ward what is insulting God and destroying man.

But it is still more plainly to our purpose, as against this religious fatalism, to allege the matter of fact, that though it has been the mysterious will of the Supreme Governor to permit such great evils in the earth, it has as evidently been his will to maintain a continual war against them. Why have there been any vindictive interpositions of his among the inhabitants of the world? Let the memorials of cities, and tribes, and nations, and in one instance a world, destroyed, testify whether he has set men the example of peace with irreligion and iniquity. What is the inscription on the monuments of beings that his vengeance has smitten? What has been the interpretation required to be put on all the formidable signs held out to deter, and all the plagues that have followed when those signs warned in vain? The victims of those plagues, and the witnesses of their infliction, could not say that the warnings had been lying signs and wonders, as pretending to express heaven's protest against the evils to which the will of man had been permitted to abandon him.

And if we contemplate the Divine Being as a revealer of truth and a lawgiver, the same hostile character and design are conspicuous.

Every thing he declared or dictated is instantly seen to be adverse to something of which it had not been his will to prevent the existence in human notions or conduct. He had suffered these things to come into the world, and yet all who would believe and obey him must oppose them. Well indeed might the thoughtful listeners to his voice feel an alarming sentiment at hearing so very many things recounted for them to be committed in deadly strife against; but what would have been the piety, or the prudence, or the consequence, of a remonstrance to him against so severe a vocation, on the plea that himself had permitted, and could have prevented, every thing that he was thus imperatively involving them in painful conflict with over every step of ground till they should fall into the grave?

We repeat, that the whole course of the extraordinary divine interference among men has been in the direction, and has commanded human spirits, on their allegiance, to concur in the direction, which we are endeavouring to give to your zeal. In visions and oracles sent to patriarchs, in deliverances and avenging judgments, in the miraculous suspensions of the laws of nature, in institutions of religion, in the illuminations of prophets and apostles, in the excitement of the best men

to the most invincible pertinacity of warfare, in the mission of angels, and, transcendently above all, in the “manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the Devil,”—in all these forms of the divine dispensation, and in all the operation that has been in enlarging progress from them to this hour, one spirit breathes, one perpetual emanation of divine will and agency against that which will, nevertheless, be permitted to retain an existence, but with lessening power, on the earth till a very late period, when the “Lord shall consume it with the breath of his mouth, and destroy it with the brightness of his coming.”—Such has been the spirit of all the Divine Intervention. The sun is not more conspicuous by his own light, than this character of the religious economy.

Now then for a professed servant of God to refuse acting in conformity to this entire tendency of his cause, and to justify himself on the ground of the divine permission of that which the cause is directed against, what is it but, in effect, to say to the Supreme Governor, —I behold two views of thy government: there is thy permission of an awful array and amount of evils, and there is a system of thy dispensations framed to work in most direct and absolute opposition to them. The impossibility of apprehending the unity of principle

of these opposed parts of thy government throws a dark mystery on the one of them. But with me, unlike my fellow-mortals, the mystery rests on the latter view, on the economy constituted for resistance to the evil; whereas the reason for its permission is so plain to me, that I can, in dissent from all thy faithful servants since the world began, adopt it as my rule of conduct. In pursuance of this adoption, I dare to believe thou art, in truth, *not* so much the enemy of this same Evil as is pretended, even in thy own revelation; and that I shall, upon a certain secret understanding, please thee fully as well by declining to join in an attack upon it, as by devoting to the utmost my active forces to cooperate against it, in a war which I do at the same time perceive clearly that thou thyself, for what reason of state I cannot conjecture, hast raised and maintained with a palpable and continual interference.

Let us suppose him to act in this spirit toward his own soul. When he looks there, he sees there is a proportion, a lamentable one, of "that abominable thing" which has rendered the world so horrid a scene. But the Almighty power has *permitted* its existence there. What then? Can he on that account remain quiet, while it is poisoning the essence of his being, and feel as if it were an

homage to God to second, if we may so express it, that permission? With plain sad proof of the very active quality of the malignant infester, which seems also to become, even while he is looking at it, (if under a suspension of resistance,) sensibly stronger, by the force of a principle of augmentation altogether indefinite if left to its own progress, and which tells him, as in a demon's accents, that his soul is the intended victim, can he calmly contemplate this permitted state and operation, just as one of the inexplicable phenomena of the divine government? And if he pretended reverential submission, what manner of god could he deem himself adoring, that would be pleased with such a sacrifice? My brethren, unless his pretensions to religion are false, and his soul is actually surrendering to perdition, he will, at the sight of this mournful predicament of his own spirit, be ardently intent on an application of the means of resisting the destroyer. And he will be at once alarmed and indignant if he should perceive his mind admitting, under some influence of the consideration that God has not prevented the awful fact of sin within him, any slighter estimate of the required energy and promptitude of the resistance, than that which should be commensurate to

the evil itself, viewed absolutely, in all its atrocity and activity.

But now let him revert to the heathen slaves of darkness and sin.—If it would be cruelty to his own soul, to make the lighter of the invasion, or the means of expulsion, of its deadly enemy, because God has not precluded nor exterminated it, he may be reminded, and all the friends of christianity may be reminded, of the obligation implied in the second great commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Try once more how strongly you can bring upon your minds the reality of an immense multitude of spirits, of your own nature, existing on a remote continent. You can by thought place yourselves as sensibly amidst the countenances, the vital warmth, the talk, the worship, the infelicities, of people at the distance of some thousands of leagues, reckoned through the air, as of the inhabitants of an adjacent part of your own country. With as absolute a sense of fact as if you were at this hour in India, and were just now describing a tyger crouching to spring on one ill-fated person, or a serpent throwing its folds round another, you can behold the prodigiously numerous tribe of souls, actual living immortal essences, images and counterparts

of your own, as it were watched for, fascinated, sprung upon, grappled, by things arisen in fearful eruption from the bottomless pit. Look at them involved in the power of the Old Serpent.—If we might enforce the representation by a simile, suppose the case, that a professedly benevolent man, sojourning in that country, happened to be in a spot where he saw a tyger, eyeing with deadly glare the intended but unapprehensive victim, or a serpent in the very act of contracting itself to dart on an unwarned human object; and suppose too, that this spectator had an advantage of position which exempted him from danger, and also that he had in his hands the most efficient means for striking the monster with death or sudden fright; or that at the very least he could alarm the person in peril. Now what sort of philanthropist shall we represent if we next suppose, that while looking at this creature of living flesh and blood, who is perhaps approaching every instant nearer the spot where death is lurking, he coolly thinks what a hopeless and fearful plight; wonders that the God of nature should suffer, or theologically accounts for his suffering, beasts of prey and serpents in a world made for man; considers that, at any rate, as God *does* suffer them, men must of course be devoured by them; and so, quietly

awaits and witnesses the catastrophe, highly self-complacent, perhaps, in the sort of selfish piety with which he goes away blessing the Providence which had not doomed *him* to be the victim.

We need not make the application. We will only suggest whether, since the whole accountableness for all the error and wickedness of paganism must rest somewhere, the alleviation obtained before the Supreme Judge by the heathens who have been denied the means of deliverance from so wretched a condition, may not be at the expense of those who shall have refused to try those means upon them ; and then whether, in the solemn time of adjudgment, these latter will dare to reflect off this accountableness for omission on the Judge himself, in the allegation that the evil was of his own permission,—when they will have the consciousness that he gave them means of at least attempting its destruction.

This religious fatalism, from the dominion of which we should be glad to see the active powers of all good men rescued, may somewhat change its tone ; still, however, aiming to elude the requisition to come forth in the activity of the cause. It may affect to recover from the kind of hopeless dead prostration

of feeling at the awful fact of God's permission of so dreadful an evil, into adoration of his power as almighty to destroy it. And how loftily God shall be extolled, and how emphatically man shall be degraded, when it is hoped that some absolution from duty may be suborned from the contrast! Feelings of indolence combined with ideas of the sovereignty of God will form a state of mind prolific of such reflections as these: Of what consequence can be the trivial efforts of such insignificant creatures, as cooperating or not with the energy of an almighty power? What signify, in a great process of nature, some few rain-drops or dew-drops the more or the less? What are we, to be talking, in strains of idle pomp, of converting the people of half a world? How reduced to contempt, how vanishing from perception, will be the effects of all our petty toils, when mightier powers shall come into action; as the footsteps of insects and birds are effaced and lost under the trample of elephants. Were it not even temerity to affect to take the course where the chariot of Omnipotence is to drive; as if we would intrude to share the achievements proper to a God, or fancy that something magnificent which he has to do, will not be done unless we are there? No, let our text be, as best becomes the humility of mortals

and sinners, “ Be still and know that I am God.” If he wills the conversion of the heathen nations, he has such powers and means for accomplishing his purpose as may well allow a sabbath to the hands of all his servants, while their souls may adore him in his triumphs.—Very true; and so in the literal warfare referred to in our text, there were means of overthrowing the heathen invaders without the assistance of the people of Meroz, or any other people; for the stars in their courses were to fight against Sisera. It was not because he *needed* them for combatants, that the God of armies had required their presence in the battle.—After what has been already said of the employment of feeble means to produce a triumphantly disproportionate effect, it is superfluous to make any other answer to this indolence, or indifference, or pride, or all of them together, pleading under the semblance of piety, than an admonitory suggestion, that, as it has been hitherto God’s usual method to employ human instrumentality in his great works of beneficence, his now declining to do so, would but be the alarming expression of his judgment that the human agents now are not worth being employed on earth, nor being translated to heaven. One should think that a dread of the fatal privilege of exemp-

tion under such a judgment, would suppress the disposition to seek, and the willingness to accept, an exemption on any ground whatever.

The religious fatalism, in a still further modification, will make professions of anticipating with great delight the certain accomplishment of the glorious revolution in question, *when God's selected time shall arrive*. Then, too, as in former great changes, there will be noble work, and enough of it, for such humble instruments as men to perform; meanwhile, beware of premature attempts, and wait for the signs that the time is come. Language like this has within the memory of many of you been among the common-places of our christian communities. If there be still some cautious christians who are reluctant to let it grow obsolete, we might ask them whether they have exactly figured in their minds in what manner the expected grand process is to begin, or what appearances they could accept as signs that the period is come when their efforts would not be like a vain attempt to constrain the fulfilment of a divine purpose before its appointed time. Are there to be extraordinary meteors, significantly passing eastward as they vanish? Are they to hear that the temples of Seeva are sunk suddenly in ruins at the stroke of thun-

der? Or, still more of prodigy, are all the chief statesmen, and mercantile men, and military men, especially concerned in the affairs of the east, to become with one accord inspired with a fervent zeal for the christianizing of Asia, perhaps impelled literally to a spiritual crusade against Hindoo idolatry?

Perhaps they will, after all, disclaim the expectation of any extraordinary signals from heaven, when it occurs to them that they are in danger of the impiety of demanding a *specific* change in God's mode of declaring his mind to men. And probably they will profess that they wait for no other tokens than such as might afford a rational presumption according to the rules of judgment commonly admitted among wise men. Then we may confidently ask why they should not accept, as the required signs, the circumstances that have attended, thus far, this christian enterprise in India. Is it to be taken as a rebuke from Heaven, on a rash anticipation of Heaven's designs, that our missionaries have been kept in their positions and their work with a general impunity and freedom, notwithstanding that during many years of the time there prevailed against them a systematic unrelenting hostility of spirit, in authorities which in all human appearance might have crushed them in a moment, and were subject

to no visible cause of restraint on their will,—a preservation somewhat resembling that of Daniel in the lions' den? Or, that the comparatively little rancour, and the very considerable favour, experienced among the natives, have seemed to betray some divine coercion put upon the lions and the furies of direct paganism itself? Or, that they have been uniformly preserved in the excellence of the christian character in a scene presenting many temptations to forfeit the distinction, and while bearing the moral responsibility of an undertaking in which that forfeiture would have been fatal? Or, that by the multiplicity and extent of their labours and attainments they are constantly recalling to our imagination the hundred-handed giant of fable? Or, that between the produce of their own exertions and the increasing supplies from the religious public, pecuniary means have never failed for the constantly enlarging prosecution of the design,—even a very great disaster having operated as if the fall of an edifice should bring a large treasure of gold to light?*

Or, that while the sacred scriptures have been spreading with astonishing rapidity among

* Alluding to the fire which, some years since, reduced to ashes the printing-office at Serampore, with its immense literary stores and other materials for the service of the mission.

the nations of the East, the undertaking which has given them this range of mischief to the gods, has produced several marked good effects in our religious societies at home ; especially in the point of helping to break up, by the introduction of so many new subjects connected with religion, the *monotony* which too much prevailed in their religious services, topics, and feelings ?

What is the interpretation which our sooth-sayers of the colder climate of religious feeling put upon these signs, conjoined, as we are gratified to view them conjoined, with the enlarging missionary exertions and successes of our brethren of other religious denominations ? Or will they pronounce, that circumstances like these are *no* signs ; and sagely observe to us that in the great concourse of casualties it is at all times possible enough for a sanguine spirit to find a number that may be converted into intimations that a favourite project of its own is also the intention of Heaven. When they have said this, they may consider whether they should not, in their solicitous and alarmed veneration for Heaven's appointment of times and seasons, abet the gods and their priests in an appeal to the Lord of the world against these missionary intruders, as committing impiety against *Him* in having "come to torment *them* before the time."

It has been the lot of a number of the persons who have believed themselves to be obeying the will of the Supreme Authority by leaving this country in prosecution of our Society's undertaking in Hindoostan, to die in the service. They had devoted themselves so to die, and rejoiced in the confidence that they were also devoted by a superior decree. In what manner may we believe that their departing spirits have been received by their great Master? Has it been a *qualified* "Well done, good and faithful servant," that they have heard?—as if he should say,—Feeble in judgment, rash in temperament, but honest in intention, you are pardoned through a peculiar extension of mercy, and are admitted now to a state of illumination in which you may cultivate the humility that was so defective on earth, and see in the future progress of your Lord's administration, how long his servants ought to have repressed the presumptuous forwardness of their zeal.

No, this could not be their reception in a world where they were soon to be joined by the first-fruits of that very zeal, those converts from idolatry who, subsequently to some of their teachers, have died in the faith of Christ, and carried demonstrative living proof to heaven, that the true religion had not in a premature and officious zeal been conveyed

sooner than the divine appointment had commissioned it to go, sooner than the divine power was ready to accompany it, to a region whither some of its professed friends would not have contributed to send it. And if we may imagine the nature of the emotion in the great assembly at the arrival of these spirits from the dominions of idolatry, we shall not believe it to have been the melancholy felicitation which should welcome them as almost solitary exceptions to a destiny, regarded as still permanently abiding on the immense division of the human race whence they came. We cannot conceive of an unmingled delight in receiving them as translated thither chiefly to exemplify that sovereignty of God which he will manifest in every department of his government, by suspending in rare instances his most general appointments; as two individuals have been exempted from the general law of mortality. The sentiment without which the joy would be languid, must have been that which should hail them as signs that a decreed change of dispensation, a new aspect of the divine sovereignty, is beginning to shine on a dark hemisphere of the world; that death is becoming incomparably more tributary to heaven; and that the ancient barrier between the realms of Asia and the kingdom of eternal glory is beginning to break down.

This indulgence of thought in representing to ourselves the feelings experienced in an invisible and superior world, is quite within the just range of our contemplation of the subject. It is a noble distinction of religion that, (once admitted as true,) it affords a rational substance to bear out the most imaginative exercise of thought. It is a ground on which our ideal excursions may with sober propriety go such a length as they cannot attempt on other grounds without turning into poetry or into vanity. It verifies to us as a reality a solemn relation between us and another economy of existence ; and constitutes a vital intermedium through which we have the sense of a real interest in beings and a state beyond the sphere of this world. Thus religion, believed and felt, is the amplitude of our moral nature. And how wretched an object therefore is a mind, especially of thought, sensibility, and genius, condemned to that poverty and insulation which infidelity inflicts, by annihilating around it the medium of a sensible interest in the existence, the emotions, the activities, of a higher order of beings ! Our Lord tells us of great and happy intelligences in the invisible world who rejoice over a sinner when he repents. It is quite rational, then, to have indulged our imaginations for a moment in ideas of the

reception, in that scene, of those first converts from paganism, in the course of our Mission, who have been followed in death by some of the persons whose labours were crowned with this success. And we are especially warranted in the most vivid imagination which it is possible to form of the emotions of these proclaimers and these converts of the truth, in their mutual recognition, when thus reunited, and in communion with the preceding believers, apostles, and confessors. If but a comparatively faint apprehension of the emphasis of those congratulations could be brought, by some momentary illapse, upon the souls of the most neutral or even the most hostile spectators of the attempt which has had such an effect in the happiest society, it would instantly turn to grief at the thought that those heavenly felicities had owned none of that rapture to *them*.

And let us remind those professed Christians, whose coldness toward a great project of evangelization would justify itself under a plea of reverently awaiting the disclosure of the divine purposes, that by their profession they aspire to join ere long that company to which departed missionaries and their converts have been added. It may be the destination of some of them to leave this world

at nearly the time appointed for the removal by death of other of these indefatigable labourers, and of more of their proselytes. In the reflections which may be excited by such an idea, will there be no sentiment partaking of apprehension? No mortifying anticipation arises at the thought of entering the other world in company with an angelic being, the different rank of his nature precluding all comparison, or precluding reproach for the difference, if comparison were made. But methinks there is something to cause great displacency, and even a degree of intimidation, in the thought of approaching the most illustrious society in the universe in the company of spirits of our own nature and our own times, trained under nearly similar privileges and instructions, or possibly the very same, but who through superior zeal shall have left us in an immense disparity. Think whether it be impossible that, even on the passage to heaven, there might be an unwelcome sense of the contrast between persons who, in going thither, shall be finishing a course of ardent devotedness to their Divine Lord, in exertions to extend his kingdom in destruction of the cruel reign of superstition, made with a degree of success attested by immortal spirits of redeemed heathens that shall have preceded them to the sky, and

others that are to follow,—and persons who, having been in circumstances so similar to theirs in the introduction of life, and having professed the same devotedness to Christ, shall yet be conscious of having scarcely made an effort in aid of that service, of having scarcely perhaps given it their cordial good wishes; conscious (may we not surmise, in some instances?) of having hardly been sorry that the comparatively small number, as yet, of conversions from heathenism, should seem to afford some advantage to the recusant or caviller. May not the thought of the feelings possible to be excited at such a time by such a contrast, suggest to christians whose faculties seem more readily applicable to the exercise of finding objections to animated schemes of christian experiment, than to that of devising means for their success, a new topic for solicitude and perhaps for prayer, namely, that they may be permitted to enter the superior state in a way that shall not immediately bring them in communication or comparison with their brethren ascending from the war against idolatry? At least, in order to be entirely free from the anticipation of any reflections, tending to throw a shade over the joy of passing into the great Master's presence at nearly the same time as those devoted spirits, there must

be the testimony of conscience that *in some other manner* his service is zealously prosecuted. The man indifferent or opposed to the enterprise in which these men are to die, but who yet professes to take an interest in the advancement of religion and the general good, can avoid the apprehensiveness of such a future comparison only by having evidence to himself that, though projects which seem to him to partake somewhat of enthusiasm are not exactly adapted to seize his mind, he is diligently intent on promoting the cause of God in plainer, less adventurous, and let him call them, if he will, soberer methods. But, in truth, experience is not in favour of our expecting a very active zeal for extending christianity in *any* method, from those who recoil from missionary projects as premature and enthusiastic.

For ourselves, my brethren, when we think of those who are thus appointed to fall in the immediate conflict with the powers of paganism, shall we not earnestly desire and pray, that we may be so animated to promote the christian cause in *every* practicable way, that we may never have reason to wish these men had not been our contemporaries, no more privileged than ourselves in early life; or that there would be an oblivion of this, to avert

any pain of comparison when they and we shall go to the great account.

To return, but for one moment, to the repressive influence on some good men's principles of action and hope, from the idea of the sovereignty of the divine appointments, we may observe, that the most assured belief in the divine decrees, as comprehending all things, has not *necessarily* the effect of paralyzing the active powers. There is no denying that such is its tendency in cold, inanimate, indolent spirits, that are really indifferent to the objects demanding their exertion. And so with respect to *any* doctrine of religious or moral truth, there is a possible state of mind which is apt to take from it an injurious impression. But let there be an earnest interest about the objects in question, and then the zeal and activity will be incited rather than repressed by the faith in all-comprehending and absolute decrees. Accordingly it has been, we think, for the greater proportion, by decided predestinarians, that the most ardent and efficient exertions of religious innovation have been made upon the inveterate evils of the world. That they were not checked and chilled by this article of their faith, is the least that their conduct

testified of its effect. Not only were they not withheld from driving impetuously against the hated thing before them by any surmise whether it might not, for the present, be guarded invisibly by the shield of a decree. Not only did they dart their weapons, when the enemy appeared to be within their reach, without being stopped by any suspicion of an optical deception in this seeming nearness, this possibility of striking it. This is only supposing them not to be *the less* energetic in consequence of their predestinarian faith; it is what they might be, supposing them the while to *forget* it. But it was not as forgetting their principle, and being actuated, for the time, solely by the independent force of different ones, that they so nobly exerted themselves. No, they acted in the full recollection of it, as a source of invigoration no less indispensable than for Antæus to touch the earth. It was in the element of this doctrine of decrees that they felt their impetus the mightier, their weapons the sharper, their aim the surer.

And while their opponents in belief might be wondering at the phenomenon of such a glow of life, and play of strength, in an element which they had been constantly pronouncing the most mephitic in the whole world of opinion to moral energy, the persons

on whom the faith had this influence could have shewn how explicable and how far from absurd was such a practical effect, in the case of men in the prosecution of plans for the destruction of what was opposed to the kingdom of God. The first consideration in the matter was the trite and general one,—they were certain that the Almighty will make very great use of human agents in what remains of the course of his dispensations in this world. Next, whatever concealment may rest on the precise nature of his more special determinations, which constitute, so to speak, the divisible portions of his one grand design, there can be no question, with believers in revelation, whether that grand design be a progressive demolition of the dreadful tyranny of evil over the human race. Now *that* was what *they* were intent upon; and they were putting themselves directly into his hands as willing instruments to be applied to that use. And was it not (they thought) most reasonable to entertain a general assurance that willing agents, offered to him for a purpose which he is determined to accomplish, would have their appointment for effective service? If so many would be required that even repugnant or undesigning ones would be made to contribute and cooperate, by his constraining and over-ruling Providence, the willing and

zealous ones might in all reason be sure of being put to such an use. The disposition itself was inspired, they thought, for the very purpose of adapting them, and the adaptation given with the intention of employing them. Thus, upon the certainty of their coincidence with God's intention, considered generally, they founded and justified a confidence that they had a *general* appointment to do something in his great work,—an appointment, that is to say, to promote it *in some way or other*.

But no man who is powerfully actuated can stop in generals. Those devout predestinarians, those *genuine* adorers of the God of decrees, were earnestly attentive to the manner in which his general and comprehensive design was seen, in his revelation, resolving itself into defined parts, and taking the form of several great purposes, distinguishable from one another, while all combined in the entire design. Of these several purposes, thus distinguished and announced, there was probably one which was of a nature more specially to interest their feelings, and draw to this particular direction the zeal and cooperation which were in devoted readiness to coincide with the divine intentions as regarded generally. And when they felt their

general coincidence of spirit thus determined to one marked division of the divine plan, they acquired a still more animated assurance of their appointment to a practicable and successful service, in proportion as they thus came more distinctly to see *how* they might cooperate in that design.

Nor was this all ; for when they thus saw one particular part of the scheme of the divine intention manifested with considerable definiteness, they felt an irresistible tendency to make it more definite still, by resolving this too into particulars. For example ; if revelation has declared the destruction of superstition to be one leading object comprehended in the great general intention, their zeal has impelled them to regard this declaration as bearing with special emphasis on those particular forms of superstition which they were most intent on destroying. Those particular forms, they have said, so eminently hateful, cannot but be very marked objects of the exterminating intention of the supreme will. It has seemed to these men as if the whole force of the general decree were converging to strike just where *they* wished to strike. And as the principle of destruction is to be conveyed through the means of human agents, who so likely to be employed, they said, as we that are already on fire to destroy ? Beyond all

doubt it is exactly here that we have our decreed and unalterable allotment. Exactly here it is, that our will and the supreme will coalesce to a purpose which defies all chance and all created power.

But their assurance that their intention, as fixed on a particular selected object, was decidedly identical with that of the Almighty, did not authorize itself solely by thus giving to those declarations which express the divine purpose in comprehensive terms, a more determinate bearing on a special object. For some inspired declarations were found which were themselves of special import. They evidently pointed out, by their own terms, with much definiteness, certain distinct parts and special processes in the general scheme which Providence will execute. These appeared as departments or sections, (if we may so express it,) within wider divisions of operation which are still themselves but parts of the grand scheme; as, for example, the foredoomed destruction of the Popish superstition, though a thing of such magnitude, is only a portion of the divine plan for the destruction of superstition in general, which is yet but a part of the entire scheme announced for accomplishment. The devout men who have sought their incitement and their strength in the decrees of heaven, have often

believed that they saw, in some of these more defined and special portions, in these comparatively distinct representations of movements which are to fulfil on earth the purposes of heaven, the very image of such designs as they were zealous to prosecute. It was quite certain at least that those appointed operations must at any rate involve such as they were projecting or attempting; and the predicted success of the whole must be the success of the included parts. But, they said again, there are predestined *agents*; and who still so likely as men who shall be ready with their life and their death for precisely that service? The inference was not far off;—These very plans and proceedings of ours are decreed, as portions of the sovereign scheme; we and our work are a part of eternal destiny.

We are not here called upon to suggest the cautions against the possible excesses and dangers of this confident assurance in good men that their designs are *specifically* identical with the divine purposes. Our object was to shew, that the consideration of sovereign decrees, which cold unwilling minds are so ready to allege for their inertness, and which is so commonly asserted to have necessarily that consequence, may, on the contrary, become one of the mightiest forces for action. It is this that can make, but under a far no-

bler modification, the man that the poets have delighted to feign, who would maintain his purpose though the world fell in ruins around him. A missionary against the paganism of the Hindoos may feel an animation specially appropriate to the service, in this assurance that his intention is the intention of God. Those people fortify themselves in the notion, or the pretence, that they are immediately actuated by some deity, and therefore fulfilling, under a law of necessity, his determinations : the missionary will feel peculiar invigoration in advancing to the assault of a superstition with such a principle in its front, in the force of a principle analogous in form, but of heavenly essence. While they will have it, that he may as well spare the efforts on *them* which it were his more proper business to level at the gods, if he could reach them, the energy of his soul will reply, that he accepts the challenge so made for those enthroned abominations, for that he verily believes himself and his confraternity to be an *Avatar* for their destruction.

We have dwelt too long on this topic of religious fatalism, a term we have employed to signify a perverted application, in reasoning and feeling, of the doctrine which acknow-

ledges God's sovereign and unalterable predestination of events. Our excuse must be that these reasonings and feelings are peculiarly apt to suggest themselves in contravention to such claims as those we are at present wishing to exhibit. And besides their own direct force, they lend strength to other objections and repugnant feelings not arising from so speculative a source. The meanest of the passions, that can make an opposition to a worthy project, or withhold from it the necessary aid, are very ready to find an excuse, a justification, or even a merit, in a pretended waiting submission to the decrees of heaven.

Many causes of a nature not implicated with these obscure speculations, are operating to prevent or lessen the assistance to an enterprise like that for which we are pleading. We may briefly notice one or two.

If we just name Party-spirit, it is not in order to indulge in any accusatory complaints that our particular undertaking has materially suffered by it. Doubtless we may be somewhat the worse for it; but we have as little the inclination as the means for calculating how much. And even were a calculation made and verified of that proportion of pecuniary and other modes of aid which a perfect christian liberality would have awarded

to this project, and which party spirit may have withheld from it, we should still be gratified in the persuasion that the greater part of what may have been so averted, has probably been devoted to other excellent designs to which we wish all possible success. The history of this portion of the general christian operations of the age, will have little to say of convoys intercepted by selfish allies. We are too confident of the prolonged favour of Providence on our work, and too much pleased at seeing that Providence favouring the exertions of the same tendency made by other sects of the great christian community, to regret not having obtained any one particle of the means which have availed to good in their hands. And we think we have too systematically avoided giving any just cause of jealous reaction to our friends of the other denominations, to be debarred in modesty from denouncing, with unrestrained censure, the spirit which cannot see the merit of a noble object when there is some point of controversy with its promoters, and which would almost rather wish it might be lost, than aid *them* to attain it : a spirit which, in promoting an interest professedly as wide as the world, as liberal as the sun, would enviously account success, or the means of success, conferred on a different class of labourers in the same

general cause, so much unjustly subtracted from our own connexion and project; and would avenge on the grand catholic object the petty offences of party, or affronts to individual vanity.

If the christian communities, most liable to feelings of competition, were asked in what character they conceive themselves to stand the most prominently forward before the world, as practically verifying the exalted, beneficent, expansive spirit of their religion, it is not improbable they would say, it is as conspirers to extend heavenly light and liberty over the heathen world. But if so, how justly we may urge it upon them to beware of degrading this the most magnificent form in which their profession is displayed, by associating with it littlenesses which may make it almost ridiculous. Surely, in thus going forth against the powers of darkness, they would not be found stickling and stipulating that the grand banner of the cause should be surmounted with some petty label of a particular denomination. Such mortals, had they been in the emigration from Egypt, would have been incessantly and jealously busy about the relative proximities of the tribes to the cloudy pillar. A shrewd irreligious looker-on, who can divert himself at the expense of all our sects, and despises this their

common object, might indulge his malicious gaiety in saying, All this bustling activity of consultation, and oratory, and subscription, and travelling, is to go to the account, as you will have it, of a fervent zeal for christianity: what a large share of this costly trouble I should nevertheless be sure to save you, if I could just apply a quenching substance to so much of this pious heat as consists of sectarian ambition and rivalry.

We cannot too strongly insist again, that a sense of dignity should spurn these inglorious competitions from the sections of the advanced camp against the grand enemy. *Here*, at all events, the parties should acknowledge the Truce of God. If they have, and must have, jealousies too sacred to be extinguished, let their indulgence be reserved for occasions and scenes in which they are not assuming the lofty attitude of a war against the gods. But the great matter, after all, is to be solemnly intent on the object itself, on the good to be done, compared with which, the denomination of the instrument will appear a circumstance vastly trivial. Let all the promoters of these good works be in this state of mind, and then the modes in which the evil spirit in question might display itself will be things only to be figured in the imagination, or sought as facts in the history of former and

worse times. For then we shall never actually see a disposition to discountenance a design on account of its originating with an alien sect, rather than to favour it for its intrinsic excellence; nor an eager insisting on points of precedence; nor a systematic practice of representing the operations of our own sect at their highest amount of ability and effect, and those of another at their lowest; nor the studied silence of vexed jealousy, which is thinking all the while of what it cannot endure to name; nor that laboured exaggeration of our magnitude and achievements which most plainly tells *what* that jealousy is thinking of; nor that manner of hearing of marked and opportune advantages occurring to undertakings of another sect which betrays that a story of disasters would have been more welcome; nor underhand contrivances for assuming the envied merit of something which another sect has accomplished and never boasted of; nor excitements to exertion expressly on the ground of invidious rivalry, rather than christian emulation; nor casual defects of courtesy interpreted wilfully into intentional hostility, just to give a colour of justice to actual hostility on our part, for which we were prepared, and but watching for a pretext; nor management and misrepresentation to trepan to our party

auxiliary means which might have been intended for theirs.

While we would earnestly admonish all the promoters of our object to display an example in every point the reverse of such tempers and expedients, we will assure ourselves of the favourable dispositions of christians in general towards a design which has its own sphere of operations, in which it has both the happiness and the merit of interfering with no other. It has not, by either interference or ostentation, given any provocation to party jealousy ; and we may add, that it is grown to a strength and an establishment beyond the power of that unfriendly spirit, were it excited, greatly to injure.

When we mention the Love of Money, as another chief prevention of the required assistance to our cause, we may seem to be naming a thing not more specifically adverse to this than to any and every other beneficent design. A second thought, however, may suggest to you a certain peculiarity of circumstance in the resistance of this bad passion to the claims of a scheme for converting heathens. By eminence among the vices which may prevail where the true God is not unknown, this of covetousness is denominated in the word of that God,

Idolatry. Now as it is peculiarly against idolatry that the design in question is aimed, the repugnance shewn to it by covetousness may be considered as on the principle of an identity of nature with its enemy. One idolater seems to take up the interest of all idolaters, as if desirous to profit by the warning, that if Satan be divided against himself his kingdom cannot stand.

Or rather it is instinctively that this community of interest is maintained, and without being fully aware; for the unhappy mortal, while reading or hearing how millions of people adore shapes of clay or wood or stone, or metal, of silver or gold, shall express his wonder how rational creatures can be so besotted; shall raise his eyes to heaven in astonishment that the Almighty should permit such alienation of understanding, such dominion of the wicked Spirit: and there is no voice to speak in alarm to his conscience, Thou art the man!

As this unhappy man may very possibly be a frequenter of our religious assemblies, and even a pretender to personal religion, he is solicited, in the name of Jesus Christ, to bring forth something from his store in aid of the good cause. He refuses perhaps; or, much more probably, just saves the appearance and irksomeness of formally doing that, by con-

tributing what is immeasurably below all fair proportion to his means; what is in such disproportion to them that a general standard taken from it would reduce the contributions of very many other persons to a fraction of the smallest denomination of our money, and would very shortly break up the mechanism of human operation for prosecuting a generous design, throwing it directly on Providence and miracle, with a benediction perhaps uttered by this man, (for he will be as liberal of cant as parsimonious of gold,) on the all-sufficiency of that last resource: Yes, God shall have the glory of the salvation of the heathens, while he is happy to have secured the more important point—the saving of his money.

How much it were to be wished, that the fatuity which this vice inflicts on the faculty which should judge it, (herein bearing one of the most striking characteristics of idolatry,) did not disable the man to take an honest account of the manner in which it has its strong hold on his mind. If when his eyes and thoughts are fixed upon this pelf, regarded as brought into the question of going to promote the worship of God in Asia, or staying to be itself worshipped, he could clearly feel that he detains it from fervent affection to it as an absolute good, he would

be smitten with horror to find his soul making such an object its supreme good—for supreme it plainly is when thus preferred to the cause of God, and therefore to God himself.

But perhaps he thinks his motive regards the prospects of his family. Perhaps he has a favourite or an only son, for whom he destines, with the rest of his treasure, that portion which God is demanding. In due time that son will be put in possession by his father's death, and will be so much the richer for that portion. That this wealth will remain long in his hands, a prosperous and undiminished possession, may not seem very probable when we recollect what has been seen of the heirs of misers. But let us suppose that it will, and suppose, too, that this son will be a man of sensibility and deep reflection. Then, his property will often remind him of his departed father. And with what emotions? This, he will say to himself, was my father's god. He did, indeed, think much of me, and of securing for me an advantageous condition in life; and I am not ungrateful for his cares. He professed also not to be unconcerned for the interests of his own soul, and the cause of the Saviour of the world. But alas! it presses on me with irresistible evidence, that the love of money had a power

in his heart predominant over all other interests. It cannot be effaced from my memory that I have often observed the strong marks of repugnance and impatience, an ingenuity of evasion, an acuteness to discover or invent objections to the matter proposed to him, however high its claims, if those claims sought to touch his money, which he contemplated, and guarded, and augmented, with a devotedness of soul quite religious. But whither can a soul be gone that had such a religion? Would he that acquired, and guarded even against the demands of God, these possessions for me, and who is thinking of them now as certainly as I am thinking of them, oh would he, if he could speak to me while I am pleasing myself that they are mine, tell me that they are the price of my father's soul?

If the rich man in the parable, (that parable being regarded for a moment as literal fact,) *might* have been permitted to send a message to his relatives on earth, what might we imagine as the first thing which the anguish of his spirit would have uttered in such a message? Would it not have been an emphatic expression of the suffering which the wealth he had adored inflicted on him now, as if it ministered incessant fuel to those fires? Would he not have breathed out an earnest entreaty

that it might not remain in that entireness in which it has been his idol ; as if an alleviation might in some way arise from its being in any other state and use than that in which he had sacrificed his soul to it ? Send away some of that accumulation ; give some of it to the cause of God, if he will accept what has been made an abomination by being put in his stead. Send some of it away, if it be but in pity to him of whom you surely cannot help sometimes thinking while you are enjoying it. Can you, in the pleasures and the pride which that wealth may impart, escape the bitter thought, that for every gratification which it administers to you, it inflicts an unutterable pang on him by whose death it has become yours, and by whose perdition it is so much.

How different the reflections of those inheritors, who feel in what they do *not* possess a delightful recognition of the character of their departed relatives ; who feel that they possess so much the less than they *might* have done, because those relatives have alienated to them nothing of what was sacred to God, and to charity ; and who can comprehend and approve the principle of that calculation of their pious predecessors, which accounted it even one of the best provisions for their heirs to dedicate a portion of their

property to God. How different therefore the feelings of a descendant of such a person as that late most excellent christian and philanthropist of your city, whose name* the present topic has probably recalled to the minds of most in this assembly.

We cannot be unaware how many well-wishers to our cause must feel a severe limitation put upon their means of aiding it by the pressure of the public burdens, those burdens which oppress the energy and resources of every scheme for doing good. How often does the thought of such designs present itself to a benevolent man, at the moment of his being accosted with the peremptory demands on the public account, and make him look wishfully and regretfully at the sums he is thus surrendering, to be speedily followed, he knows, by more sums surrendered, from the profits of his laborious industry, or the produce of his little property. How many implements for the holy war, he says to himself, how many bibles, or tracts, or school-manuals, in the languages of Asia, might have sprung from such sums; but this all-consuming body politic seems to know instinctively whatever good men are devising

* Reynolds.

of gratuitous service to the welfare of their fellow-creatures, and to take a pleasure in frustrating their designs, by coming upon their means as a spoil,—as if in revenge that they should seem to reproach the nation by presuming to apply their little individual means to worthier purposes than those on which the grand public resources have been expended without limit.

It is indeed a melancholy and awful view that is presented to our contemplation. A great christian state, with every conceivable mode of beneficence placed within its sight and within its powers, has throughout half an age been stimulated to almost miraculous exertions, to an expenditure surpassing all the dreams of the golden empires of romance, a consumption of forces and of materials which might seem to have been adequate, under some imaginable forms of application, to give a new character to the moral world ; and when, after all this, the christian philanthropist looks on the scene for the results, he finds that, excepting some hopeful commencements, made quite apart from the public system, and in spite of its insatiable requisitions, that which *was* to be done remains still to be done, with a frightful addition of evils to the account ; and to be done by the efforts of individuals, and those individuals suffer-

ing, from the course of national affairs, a lamentable diminution and alienation of their means.

In any large assembly, nevertheless, there may be a considerable number of persons who have mainly approved that public course of things, of which they would plead the now oppressive consequences in excuse for contributing but slightly in aid of a concern like that under our contemplation. We are not taking upon us to arraign them for such approval, when we suggest that they should be discreet in using this plea. They should think again before consequences which, as resulting naturally from a certain order of public measures, they were required in reason to foresee, at least to a considerable extent, when they deliberately gave their approbation to those measures, shall be alleged by them in exemption from assisting a work as evidently designed to promote the highest good as any undertaking in the history of the world. If they have been the professed servants of that Prince of Peace whose kingdom is not of this world, but nevertheless demands tribute from the worldly resources of its subjects, it must have been their acknowledged primary obligation to look to the advancement of that kingdom, as indeed they were admonished in the first pe-

titution of the prayer dictated to them in his own instructions. This sacred obligation they had to keep in memory, while considering what *other* expenditures of their property they should take the responsibility of approving: the responsibility, we say; for to abet and sanction a proceeding is to incur the accountableness as completely as if the manifestation of an opposite opinion would *prevent* that proceeding; and it were an idle evasion to plead that the course of measures in question would have been pursued, all the same, though disapprobation instead of coincidence had been avowed by these individuals. With this obligation resting on memory and on conscience, they could not, one should think, without alarm for their christian principles, give their sanction to what must inevitably create speedy and large demands on their property, unless they had very solid ground for assurance of being left still competent to meet the claims peculiarly authoritative on them as christians. They had to consider then what, in sober calculation, it was probable or possible there should at length be spared to them, by the voracity of such an enormous gulf as they saw swallowing up, year after year, the means of the community. We will presume that they *did*, as a matter of conscience, solemnly consider this

question, and that through the progressive stages of experience they were still satisfied, as remaining constant in the assurance that their approval of the policy which caused such a tremendous consumption, did not involve their consent to an alienation from the cause of Christ of any thing honestly belonging to it. But then we must tell them, that they will now come with a very bad grace to say that they have been deceived, and that the cause of Christ must pay the forfeit of their miscalculation. Surely against the claims of a service to which their best strength was put under the prior and paramount obligation acknowledged by their profession, they will hesitate to plead that they have been lamed in their willing adherence to another, of such widely different character.

To those who are not liable to this sort of *argumentum ad hominem*, while deploring the disability inflicted by the consequences of national conduct, it may be suggested as at once a consolation and incitement, that by far the most unequivocal omen of an amendment of the national condition, even in a temporal respect, is the very circumstance of this recently arisen zeal and activity for extending the prevalence of the true religion in the world. From what has been seen thus far we may affirm, that the Almighty has

clearly indicated this as the part of the world from which he is determined to draw the chief human means of accomplishing his most glorious designs relatively to it all ; that here he has his mines, and his assembling camp, that here is the part where lie the sinews of the holy war. But if so, and if that war is to be on so great a scale as appears to be prefigured in the visions of his prophets, may we not venture to say that he will, that he must, protect the stores applicable to his approaching campaigns, from the renewal of such dreadful depredations as we have witnessed, and from the unmitigated continuance of such as are suffered now ? We may assure ourselves that he will in due time warn off the sacrilegious hands that would seek to plunder a property appointed to so sacred a service. And what a glorious change of the national condition, when God shall, as it were, place his angel between what shall remain after all the ravage of ambition, war, and corruption, and the re-approach of these spoilers. And how gratifying to behold too, in the contrasted operations, the difference of the power of producing an effect ; to see that, whereas an astonishing and unparalleled expenditure in the vulgar kind of war has resulted in—leaving men, relatively to the objects of that war, nearly where they were, the grand spiritual power,

which we behold entering into action, will require an incalculably less portion of material means for its consumption in an operation by which it is to transform the moral world.

You will not, my brethren, feel it a damp upon the pleasure of anticipating this rescue from the spoilers, that the temporal means so redeemed will still not be held in entire and absolute property by their possessors, but will still be in part under a foreign and authoritative claim. For, besides that it is pleasing to devout minds to hold and regard all things as belonging to God, and as to subserve whatever purpose he pleases, they may be very confident that he will make it to be the better for the community itself, in a temporal respect, whenever there shall prevail in it a disposition to apply its means to promote his cause. Indeed this very spirit will involve a principle of counteraction to all such things as we have seen most miserably destroying the temporal welfare of the nation.

For the present, while many friends of religion are labouring under the grievous pressure, we may suggest it to them as a consideration not unfit to accompany that prudence with which their conduct is to be left in charge, that the offerings to God from what calamity has left have a peculiar value in his esteem, and in the feelings of the sufferer may

contribute to exalt adversity into piety. Should we go back in thought to that period of the world when sacrifices, literally, were appointed for the expression of homage to Heaven, we might imagine the case of a devout man whose corn-fields, or plantations, or flocks, had for the greater part perished by some destructive visitation, as by tempests, or fire, or locusts, or disease. Let us suppose him, nevertheless, in looking pensively over the scene, to consider whether yet some small portion of the remainder might not be spared for God, as a token of humble resignation to him that gave and had taken away. Would not that probably be the most acceptable sacrifice that had ever burnt on his altar, and offered with the most affecting emotions of religion? Nor would it seem to him to lessen what was already so little, but rather to augment it in value by bringing a divine benediction upon it. Or suppose a pious man, in that ancient time, to have been cast, by shipwreck, alone, on a desert coast. If his religion, predominant in all scenes and over all feelings, inspired the wish to make a burnt-offering to his God, his only means might have been a little provision saved from the wreck, and fragments of his ship for fuel. But in the solemnity of bearing toward heaven the expression of a sublime devotion, this would sur-

pass all other sacrificial flames he had ever kindled or beheld. It might appear to his faith, amidst the gloom of the solitary shore, as a symbol of that presence which was in the fire that Moses saw in the desert.

Perhaps it may be justly thought, that the notions, dispositions, and circumstances, above recounted as adverse to the spirit for christianizing the heathens, and as causing a refusal of the desired assistance to an undertaking which is with that design in actual operation among them, did not require to be commented on at such length. We gladly leave them to lose their power of counteraction under the progressive ascendancy of unfettered thinking, experience, benevolent zeal, and that better aspect which we hope that a good Providence will ere long give to the times, if it were only for the purpose of replenishing the resources of schemes for extending the dominion of divine truth. We shall hasten toward a conclusion by briefly suggesting a few ideas tending to animate the piety of persons already inclined in this way to "come to the help of the Lord."

And surely there is something very captivating in such an expression itself, combined with numerous sentences in the Bible, less bold and striking in phrase, but of the same

spirit. It is strange that we are not oftener surprised and delighted at the condescension shewn by the Almighty, in expressing the dictates of his will to his servants in terms and images which permit them to regard the performance of their duty, their mere duty, in the light of cooperation with him. The thought of being authorized by him to entertain so sublime an idea of their vocation, might bear them up in their deepest distresses and severest labours; might animate them though a world were against them. So ennobled a character of their service, however, which it would have been profaneness for them to have arrogated without such a sanction, is fit to be dwelt upon in its full magnitude only when their minds are the most elevated in devotion, when consequently their humility is the most profound. In the usual tenour of their religious feelings, it should be honour enough to inspire complacency and activity in their work, that they can regard themselves in the humbler capacity of instruments; that the Supreme Agent chooses to effect by means of them what he could accomplish with infinite facility without them.

Apply the consideration to the matter now before us. He could by a mere act of his will cause an instantaneous disappearance from the globe of that enormous system of

mythological delusion, with all its rites, iniquities, and guardian evil spirits. It might vanish like a vapour of the morning, and leave but its wreck and monument in fallen temples and shivered idols, thenceforth a harmless mass of matter, dispossessed of that property which had breathed poison into men's souls. And indeed, if we were regarding the extermination of that monstrous superstition in no other view than that of the advantage of its being the soonest out of existence, we might almost be tempted to desire so illustrious a catastrophe. If such a thing might be, a servant of God would be willing to forego the honour of his share in the destruction. But when he finds it so evident that, in the divine plans, it is not the sole object to attain the one last effect, but that they are condescendingly formed in such a manner that their execution shall be an employment, a discipline, and an honour, to human agents, he will feel, (if his spirit is attuned to the great purposes of his Master,) a generous impatience that these agents may be prompt to seize the honour thus brought within their reach. With fire-brands and torches put into their hands, can they be content, he exclaims, to stand still and let them burn out, while the huge fabric inhabited by demon gods, and filled with pestilent abominations,

spreads wide and towers aloft in pride and security before them? Let them advance and prove who has sent them, and whence the fire came that they bear. Let them go and demonstrate upon the proud assemblage of possessors of a region not their own, that the decree of expulsion coming upon them at last is not to be defied because He, whose own approach when on earth was always the imperative signal for infernal audacity to retire, seems now only to send his servants to execute his will. That his will should pass into effect through such an agency, may well excite the wonder of those who find such a commission offered to them. It must be the highest distinction which he has to confer on mortals, thus to summon them forth, in the sight of far nobler mightier intelligences, to so great a work for the enlargement of his kingdom. It will also be a religious triumph as against the principalities and powers of evil, that it should please him to accomplish his victory by the means of creatures who, in thus serving their God, should be avenging their race; that these powers should see, that when the irresistible might was at last to be put forth, it was to be through the instrumentality of beings of that order which they had so long despised, and tyrannised over, and tormented.

It is a still further cause of delight, that

this putting forth of strength under the external form of weakness, is analogous to the one greatest manifestation of vindicating and redeeming energy.

As an incitement to christians to throw a measure of their activity into enterprises aimed at such an object, they may be reminded that, while enjoined to preserve moderation in their own demands upon this earth, they are entitled to be ambitious, shall we not say arrogant, on behalf of their Lord. In their view, the worst usurpation beyond all comparison, in the world, must be that which any where presumes to withhold an inhabited tract from his actual dominion. On whatever it is that does so presume, let them expend the animosity which might otherwise find its meaner exercise against the boundaries that obstruct their own projects of acquisition. And in this nobler direction it will not be the passion which frets itself against what is unalterable, and despairs. For they have reason to be assured that those limits against which this more consecrated ambition is impelled in hostility, will at length be carried away. They can descry through the gross darkness that covers the pagan regions, a mystical signature by the finger of God, on every spot, to indicate its assignment by that covenant which has given to the Messiah the heathen

for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. That declared decree in heaven, that substance of the thing hoped for, is brought down to the earth in the confident anticipations of the faithful, and beheld as in the fact of an universal kingdom.

They see among leading mortals an ardent competition for dominion over spaces of territory, with angry controversy about titles and usurpations, and an incessant resort to the expedient which wastes the contenders and the subject of contention. They loathe and abhor this spectacle of a world with its unnumbered myriads continually made a sport and a prey of the bad passions of those predominant mortals, by their power of exasperating and directing the bad propensities of subservient multitudes. The contemplators of the scene, if they believed it must be always thus, might well be affected with passionate longings for omens of its approaching dissolution. An oracle that should tell them, in the plainest meaning of the words, that "the end of all things is at hand," might delight them more than ever a pagan mover of an ambitious enterprise was elated by voices or signs from the fane of his deity assuring him of conquest. But they have a better consolation in the faith that

amidst all these tumults of conflict, amidst all these destructive competitions of transitory potentates, there is gradually unfolding itself a cause destined to grow to a dominion which will leave no province nor tribe of the earth to be contested by the rivalries of an insane ambition.

In the mean time, if they observe any state making a great progress in power and occupancy on the face of the world, it will well become their character to shew an animated concern that the kingdom which has their peculiar allegiance may be as evidently advancing, and that to this progress that enlargement of the temporal dominion may be made in some way to subserve. And here you will all be reminded of the wonderfully rapid extension of the British acquisitions in Asia, where we cannot help interpreting it in favour of a higher cause, that a lying spirit should have betrayed so many pagan and Mahomedan powers to provoke their own destruction. We can, in this view of such vast conquests, thank the contrivers and the heroes, whose contempt would at any stage of the career have been excited at the notion of its having been the real cause of their success that they were preparing the way for christianity.

It is of course for men of counsel and of

war to scorn this fanatical mode of estimating splendid conquests. But we can see little on any other ground to console good men for the heavy addition made by conquests so splendid, to those public burdens which leave them such scanty means of doing good of their own choice and in their own manner. Should national glory be talked of, we could have no fear of making the appeal to every one within hearing, whether he, as an individual of the nation, and one of the owners therefore of the glory of these eastern acquisitions, would not most willingly surrender his share of it on the terms of receiving back, were that possible, so much as it may fairly be calculated to have cost him, with the addition of so much as it is yet to cost. Especially this would be a safe appeal to a man who is thinking what a valuable contribution that sum would be to projects for diffusing christianity through that part of the world. It has not been left him for any such disposal. But still, let him hope in Divine Providence that even to that object it has not been altogether lost. And here is a project which seeks to *redeem* to this very purpose what has been taken and expended in a spirit infinitely foreign to it, and what, unless so redeemed, may be justly accounted, for the greater portion of it, lost in the most absolute sense.

But *this* enterprise too is a concern of serious expense. The advocates of this design have no way of avoiding the confession that it seeks to impose a little more cost for India on persons to whom that country has, independently of their will, cost too much already; but it is an addition somewhat of the nature of an insurance for christianity on the ultimate effect of the large expenditure past and to come. It is like something to be thrown into the water, to cause that miraculously to float which were else irrecoverably sunk.

The object is, that the true religion may advance upon the track of our victorious armies, may plant stations on the fields of their encampments and battles, may demolish, in the moral sense, as many strong holds of superstition as our artillery has reduced fortresses; may, in short, carry on operations corresponding to the wars in all the points esteemed the most glorious. And what a delightful thing, if thus a Power never thought of by either of the parties in the long conflict, shall come in and take the best of the spoils, and assume, in a better sense, the dominion which so many potentates have been compelled to resign; shewing the one people how they had, in truth, been beguiled through expenditure and exertion, for an object for

which they would have scorned to make, knowingly, a thousandth part of such a sacrifice, and the other, that their political independence was lost but in order that a conquest over all their gods might be gained.—But how is a design which looks to such consequences to be supported in the prosecution? It is evident there is no way but that in which the friends of religion may, if they will, decline to afford their aid.

Among the many reasons why we think they should not so decline, we may suggest the certainty that all contributions will be applied in a manner to produce the greatest possible effect. One of the most conspicuous and uncontested of the merits of the undertaking has been the economy of expenditure throughout the whole system. The statements of what has resulted, in a substantial form, besides an immensity of such exertions as cannot be brought into formal account, give evidence that all who have been concerned in expending have had a conscientious regard to the object. As to the missionaries themselves, it is impossible to conceive a stronger pledge for the careful application of the whole resources, than the fact of their having many years generously devoted the produce of their own indefatigable labours. *This* warfare therefore, in Hindoostan, is in

no danger of incurring a charge which has been constantly and heavily laid on the conduct of our other wars there. We may be assured that all the supplies afforded to *this* service will go into the effective apparatus, and will be felt in the enemy's camp. It is gratifying to a contributor to feel confident that what goes from his hand as a real and sensible diminution of what was his own, will not be as if annihilated or thrown into the sea, but will be really efficient, in its measure, in the distant service for which it is surrendered.

While we pay the tribute of our admiration and gratitude to the devotedness, the disinterestedness, and the astonishing performances, of the fraternity at Serampore, we cannot help being reminded that the chief of these labourers are advanced in life, and the leader of the whole band verging fast, in point of age, to the decline. We will not dwell on the irreparable loss which the cause sustained by them with so noble an energy is one day to suffer. But it does seem highly desirable that the remaining portion of the lives of these veterans should be turned to the utmost account. For one thing, a few spirits so long and severely disciplined, who have mastered so much difficulty, that nothing which can remain appears at all formidable to them, and

who habitually, and now as it were mechanically, labour at the extreme pitch of their labouring power,—and that power indefinitely increased by practice,—a few such men, and those also acting in concert, are to be estimated at perhaps ten-fold their numerical force, even considered in reference simply to the amount of work they can perform. But again, so long as these men are spared, to remain in conjunction at the head of the system, they will do much to preserve in it a compactness, a judiciousness of distribution, a commensurateness of agents to their respective work and to one another, and a comprehensiveness of scheme greatly conducive both to rapidity of execution, and to that uniformity and consistency of principle in the proceedings, which is of great importance in a cause that, in provoking the conflict with so mighty a league of iniquities, has need to be in harmony within itself. Add to this, that the high example of these leaders is forming a standard for their younger coadjutors, who will be the better qualified to become their successors, the larger the scale is on which they behold their manner of operation.

Now, while there is no adding to the *length* of these invaluable lives, it is possible to make, if we may so express it, an addition to their breadth. That is, it is possible for these

men's minds and their system to be brought into action on a larger amount of materials, and therefore over a space both morally and locally more extended. And great stress is to be laid on the consideration that more copious aid supplied during their life would be, not simply so much more of means put in action, to produce an addition of effect proportioned to the value of those means considered absolutely; but means put in action according to a ratio of force peculiar to a transient conjuncture, the like of which cannot exist again: such enlarged aid would serve the cause in the magnified proportion of these men's preeminence of adaptedness to serve it.

Nor is it any disparagement, by anticipation, to the zeal and talent which we are confident the Supreme Head of the church will appoint in long succession to this work, when we represent the special importance of aiding it in this particular stage, on the ground that a combination of men uniting the advantage of a patriarchal priority in time, with individual endowments so distinguished, and with such complete conformity of agencies, constituting, as it were, a great intellectual machine, can hardly ever be equalled in the power of making the most efficient application of whatever means shall be supplied.

The right policy, in this case, is the same as that which would impel a State, engaged in some ambitious enterprise, to push its military operations most earnestly, and with every practicable reinforcement, during the last campaign in which those operations could probably have the advantage of being directed by an unbroken band of veterans trained in conjunction to victory in the service.

And even as regarding these men themselves, willing, like St. Paul, to forego, if it might be put at their option, a more speedy emancipation from their toils to the final rest, and to labour on to the last period of exhausted nature,—it seems due from our sympathy and gratitude to wish, that if death should not deny them the time, the christian public should not refuse them the other means for advancing the introductory process of the great work to a point where they would be perfectly willing to bid it adieu. That supposed limit of their christian ambition is not altogether an imaginary one: Elijah's chariot, sent to bear them away, would not inspire in them such joy, in quitting the world, as to know that the most important parts of the revelation of God had been brought to speak in *every* considerable language of Asia.

But at all events, they will depart with the delight of knowing, that their distinguished

lot on earth has been to open the way, in an important sense, to the region whither they are going, for a countless multitude, many of whom they will be assured are to follow them; while they will rejoice to have staid long enough to see the evinced and completed efficacy of their appointment as evangelists in some that are gone before them. They will know that by the cause in which they have lived and laboured, and are dying, a new mode of the divine attention, a greater measure of the divine interest, has been drawn and must remain fixed in benignant radiance upon a formerly estranged and desolate tract of the world; inasmuch as wherever there are faithful witnesses to the truth, repenting sinners, and pagans making sacrifices of the idols to which they had offered sacrifice, and commencing in the name of Christ a new life, amidst prayers and praises in languages which never addressed the Almighty before, there is (speaking reverently) something to necessitate toward that spot a far more special emanation of favour and providence from heaven, than when that moral waste contained nothing related to God. If there were but one particle there of such new and sacred existence, heaven *must* continue in communication with the spot where there is something so much its own, till it became extinct, or were resumed

to the sky. How happy then if there shall be there an augmentation, every day, of what thus bears a special relation to God, to become a continually mightier attraction of the divine benignity thitherward; till at length the language of prophecy shall be fulfilled, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

In a confidence of a progressive prevalence of the gracious dispensation of which we think we see the commencement, it might be permitted to indulge for a moment in the contemplation of India as in a future age, in which distant period we can in a measure conceive what will be the reflections of a devout observer, regarding the scene in reference to the past. With the picture on his imagination of India as the missionaries will have recorded that they found it, and as many other preserved authentic descriptions will agree with them in representing it, he may look over the ample region, to wonder what is become of that direful element which was once perceived pervading and corrupting the whole wide diffusion of mental and moral existence, bringing out to view, as it were in a darkness visible of depravity, the souls of men conspicuously through their less sable

exterior. The dusky visages, the attire, the structure of habitations, and the grand features of Nature, will be seen the same ; but a horrid something, composed of lies, and crimes, and curses, and woes, that did rest in deadly possession over all the land, will be broken up and gone. Where has a place been found for what occupied for ages after ages so many cities, and villages, and houses, and minds? What tempest has driven it away? What presence has been here which *that* presence could not abide? Was it that Spirit in awe of which eternal night vanished at the creation of the world?

He may look from the southern shore toward the sublime mountain-boundary of the region on the north, and reflect what a scene it was to confront heaven, in all this breadth, with deities, and doctrines, and devotions, detestable to the true God ; each individual of unnumbered millions being infatuated and busied by notions and practices not one of which could have been in existence but by the fall of our nature. But how glorious for that reflecting observer to feel it verified to him that this is but a vision of the past, and that, departing like a dream when one awakes, it leaves him in view of a bright and blessed reality. How he will exult in the palpable evidence that the Son of God has spread his

dominion from those shores to those mountains ; that the oracles of truth have taken place of the most silly, and loathsome, and monstrous legends with which the father of lies ever made contemptuous sport of the folly of his dupes ; and that the new religion admitted in faith has crowned itself and its believers with all its appropriate virtues. When joining with them in exercises of worship to the true God, he may have short lapses of the mind into a view of the past, presented in vivid images of the fantastic fooleries, and the orgies, that once celebrated the infatuation which reigned as religion in the people, on the very same spot, as attested by some relic of the ruins of a temple ; and he will recover from such brief alienation of thought to verify the fact, that he actually *is* among persons reverently calling on God in the name of Christ. That disease of the soul will be gone that exhibits itself in alternate lethargy and raving. The charities of humanity, restored among them, will shew why it was that their ancestors could look upon, or even cause, the death of relatives and friends with stockish indifference. And finally, he will see the effect of that which missionaries are seeking to promote among them, in the manner in which the death of christianized Hindoos will differ from that sullen quiet, that stoicism

without magnanimity, with which the pagan Hindoo submits to fate.

And if we might, for a moment, entertain so improbable an idea, as that this observer and comparer should be uninformed of the general course of means and operation, through which the Almighty Spirit had accomplished this great change, we can suppose his conjectures on the subject to be much too magnificent. How came thousands of temples to be surrendered to the decay of time or the violence of dilapidation, an infinity of idols to be demolished, a mythology and ritual, involving the whole life and being of the human multitude, to be exploded, the powers of Brahmins and priests to be annihilated, a whole intellectual and moral system to be supplanted by its opposite? Might not such questions put his mind on the effort to imagine the most extraordinary modes of divine interposition? He might fancy, perhaps, that some great convulsion of nature had contributed to the overthrow of so many structures forming the glory and the fortresses of superstition; that portentous phenomena, bearing a menacing aspect upon the pagan rites, had been displayed in the heavens; that contemporary miracles, in the strict sense of the word, had attested the record of the ancient ones; or

that some peculiarity of temporal good fortune, frequently attending the converts, had marked them out to the gross apprehension of the idolaters as favourites of the Power that governs the world. And might he surmise in addition, that the foreign state, which had conquered Hindoostan, must have systematically lent, during the acquisition and possession, its whole influence arising from conquest and dominion, to promote christianity by every expedient short of force?

No, he might be told, you see, in all this glorious view, nothing which is to be referred to any such causes. The work began in some of the humblest movements that ever pointed to a great object, movements in which the actors perhaps owed their toleration to contempt. A train of ideas was excited in the minds of some individuals respecting the prophecies relative to the heathen nations. Their conversations about these with their religious friends, led to meetings, prayers, little arrangements of co-operation, and slender contributions of money. A gradual extension of these measures resulted in the sending of several zealous men, by means of conveyance marked with the disfavour of the governing authorities, to begin the experiment. It was commenced under appearances very far from resembling Constantine's pretended

vision of a cross in the clouds, inscribed as the sign of victory ; or from recalling to mind the accounts of pagan priests of other ages having been affrighted by the trembling of their fanes, accompanied by fearful voices from their recesses, announcing the abandonment of the solemn abode by the deities. Had these servants of Christ taken up their design on any condition of the intervention of preternatural omens and instrumentality, the only dictate of their experience, through every stage, would have been to lay it down. But, wild as they were accounted, both the promoters in England and the agents in the East, they had entertained no presumptions which could lead to the conclusion of its not being worth while to persevere, and to enjoin on their successors an interminable perseverance, in the trial of what the Almighty should see fit to accomplish at length by means of the diffusion of the Bible, and a never tired repetition of missionary journeys, addresses, and conferences, with the cooperating effect of schools, and writings on religion. This economy of plain expedients, (it may be supposed to be said to the future admirer of the transformation,) these operations so little related to poetry or prodigy, or to the wild ardour of fanaticism, went on in augmenting vigour, while those who had

commenced them sunk, one after another, in the dust. On their tombs their successors devoted themselves to prosecute the same labours of the holy war. Converts from heathenism, in still greater numbers every year, were brought in as captives, but to go out under the oath of hostility against that of which they and their ancestors had been the slaves. The succeeding generation of the christians of the west, were happy to continue from that quarter their alliance and aid in the mightier progress of a cause, which *their* ancestors had begun in so diminutive a form, committing in faith and hope its success to God. The influence of that Sovereign Spirit has descended in a progressive increase of efficacy far more than proportioned to the enlargement of the system of means: and so it has come to pass, (it might be said to the future admirer,) that you can exult in the disappearance from the world of one mighty form of evil, against which the christians of a past age had to maintain a long hostility.

As to us, and our period of time, there is this grand form of Moral Evil standing boldly forward in possession of a large part of our world. But this is only *one* of the forms in which that worst enemy evinces a powerful and dreadful presence. We *must*, or we are ruined, be kept in a habitual and alarming

sense of the fact, that the one thing in the creation which surpasses all others as an object for hatred, is here amidst us, and all around, in many diversities of malignant existence; and with all of them it is our vocation to be at enmity and war. My brethren, it were in vain to seek to escape from the condition of our place in the dominions of God. A mind of wandering and melancholy thought, impatient of the grievous realities of our state, may at some moments almost breathe the wish that we had been a different order of beings, in another dwelling place than this, and appointed on a different service to the Almighty. In vain! Here still we are, to pass the first part of our existence in a world where it is impossible to be at peace, because there has come into it a mortal enemy to all that live in it. Amidst the darkness that veils from us the state of the universe, we would willingly be persuaded that this our world may be the only region (except that of penal justice) where the cause of evil is permitted to maintain a contest. Here perhaps may be almost its last encampment, where its prolonged power of hostility may be suffered in order to give a protracted display of the manner of its appointed destruction. Here our lot is cast, on a ground so awfully preoccupied; a calamitous distinc-

tion! but yet a sublime one, if thus we may render to the Eternal King a service of a more arduous kind than it is possible to the inhabitants of any other world than this to render him; and if thus we may be trained, through devotion and conformity to the Celestial Chief in this warfare, to the final attainment of what he has promised, in so many illustrious forms, to him that overcometh. We shall soon leave the region where so much is in rebellion against our God. But we shall go where all that pass from our world must present themselves as from battle, or be denied to mingle in the eternal joys and triumphs of the conquerors.

THE END.

Foster, John

An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance and a discourse on the
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